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


'The indexer, Kristina Masiulis, did an excellent job.' [how pleasant for the indexer's value to be noticed!]


'Other aspects of the thoroughness of the book are to be seen in the comprehensive reference list and the index, both of which greatly enhance its usefulness and usability.'


'The work now possesses an index.'


'A good 14-page index . . .'


'Cross-referencing of the many concepts is life to the reader's (teacher's?) use of the index, which, fortunately, is thorough.'


'The programs are listed alphabetically and described in a few paragraphs in one of the volumes; the other volume contains descriptions by index category. It took a little practice to use the index, which is by computer/operating system, inside of which is application area, inside of which is an alphabetical list of programs and their description. The index is well done and is a very useful aid.'


'The report is well written and has an extensive list of references and a more-than-acceptable index; it is a model of how to present detailed research findings to a user community.'


'. . . an index of artefacts and raw material categories, giving the barrows in which, for instance, a bone half-hook, a jet spacer plate or a cupped pebble were found. This is a very useful index for the researcher anxious to locate particular categories of find in the 297 numbered barrows or 146 unnumbered barrows dealt with in the catalogue's 122 pages of text.'


'The very extensive notes comprise almost a third as much space in the book as the main text, and the rich bibliography and name and subject indexes are most valuable, too.'


'The indices [sic] of people, places and subjects are full and will be extremely useful for future scholars.'


'Warts-and-all presentation of the war and its issues . . . Numerous cross-references within the articles as well as an index weave these many topics together.'

INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

"Lists annotations of over 1440 novels by 121 authors, arranging them first alphabetically by writer. They are also listed chronologically by the story's time frame, with novels featuring series characters entered first. The 50- to 75-word annotations sketch the plot; numerous specialized indexes are helpful in finding one's way around the unconventional arrangement."

'The editors have provided a good index.'

'. . . the excellent index . . .'  

'Indexes alone take up nearly a hundred pages, and they are very effective—except for locating villages—even giving Welsh spellings where appropriate.'

'I would suggest use of this book as a reference with attention paid to the index, which is very well done. This use relieves the reader of the burden of having to deal with the tautology, although this may have been part of the author's original intent.'

'The book is blessed with a detailed, though idiosyncratic index, which allows the user to be selective.'

'. . . and an excellent index prepared by Kahn.'

'Up-to-date, clearly written, and well indexed.' (passing in all three tests of a good book)

'. . . and an excellent index prepared by Kahn.'

'Up-to-date, clearly written, and well indexed.' (passing in all three tests of a good book)

'At the end of Volume 2 there are three useful indexes: director, country of production, and year of production.'

'This book can be read straight through or used as a reference since the index is sufficiently detailed to locate short sections of text.'

'Penguin produce a series of phrase-books whose vocabulary and number of phrases is relatively small, but all the better for that. Indexing is the key, since if you cannot find a phrase quickly it might as well not be there. In the Penguin series, the basic phrases you forget 20 times a day can be found quickly.'

'What are the advantages of this paperback compared to the Government Printing Office's hardcover at $24? They are two. First, it is cheaper . . . Second, the back cover carries a very handy margin index not only to the indexes and conversion tables, but also to the major industry categories, a feature borrowed from the original, but there printed on the last page. The back cover location is more convenient.'

'Given its scope, Schlachter and Weber's thoroughly indexed directory inevitably carries over some of the information in their Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents. Most of this new directory, however, is new and all of it is useful . . . Indexes by program title, sponsoring organization, geography, subject, and annual deadline include symbols or subdivisions to indicate a program's form or audience.'

'Special mention must be made of the index, the citations, and the illustrations. The entire work is so huge that only with the help of the extensive, well-organized, and thorough index is it accessible in any useful way. Clearly, no physician or surgeon in the absence of a special need (such as preparation of a book review) will sit down and read all 5500 pages. However, the index allows one to target one's interests.'

'The whole is well indexed, making the book easy to use.'

'. . . divided topically into 31 chapters and over 300 sections—many less than a page in length—which makes The society of mind amenable to browsing yet difficult to synthesize. The book is well indexed.'

INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

'T in addition there are four excellent indices [sic]: Persons, Places, General—with some first lines—and Tunes, no less than 229 suggested for our delight.'


'The substance is given and with the full index and a table of statutes it is easy to discover the relevant statutory provision and understand its effect.'


'And massive the enterprise certainly is. The locating and collecting of all the letters has occupied three generations of scholars; every letter has been searchingly annotated and indexed . . .'


'A bibliography is included and there is an excellent index.'


' . . . the index, by the way most efficiently compiled, is like a roll-call of the then-extant human race.'


'The index is logically constructed and easy to use.'


'The standard of presentation of the enormous wealth of material is high. The list of headings at the start of each chapter is useful; the referencing is excellent, as is the index.'


'The index is well done, but could have been improved with more, and more detailed, subject headings.'


'Essentially encyclopedic and discographic, providing biographic data on individuals along with a register of their recordings . . . Though there is an index, it is not as comprehensive as the subject merits.'


'The main arrangement is alphabetical by primary subject keywords with a Title and [additional] keyword index and also an Association index. This arrangement is intended to provide for “productive browsing” and gives several access points for each title. Here I have to admit to a strong personal preference for main arrangements to be alphabetical by title and for any subject and/or keyword access to be provided by indexes; the two stage approach to find out about specific titles can be time-consuming and irritating and I suspect that browsing will often be more entertaining than productive among series of very short sections such as carpenters (1 entry), carpets (7), caves (2), ceramics (1).'


'The 279-page index is vast, indexing not only the 1,550 main topics but picking up references within entries, cross-referencing for characters, authors, themes, subjects, settings, and literary devices. Like all subject indexes, this one misses some possible entries. For example, "classmates, antagonistic" (787) cites only two references, yet antagonistic classmates abound in fiction written during this twenty-five-year period . . . Still, subject indexes are rarely satisfactory, and this one is amazingly complete in most other ways.'


'There are two indexes: the first lists names, including any variations, of the theatres; the second index lists performers, architects, theatre owners, and titles of any plays, operas, and films mentioned in the entries. Unfortunately, individuals are not identified by professions, so it is impossible, for example, to identify quickly the names of architects.'


'On a lighter note the operation of Murphy's Law (the plain soldier would be cruder) means that it had to be that part of the otherwise excellent index dealing with this reviewer's particular bit of the army that has gone wrong; generally the unacknowl-
Indexes censured


'Without quarreling with the organization of topics—some scheme or other had to be adopted—one can point out some drawbacks. For instance, any discussions of historiographic problems common to all areas are bound to be scattered. A concept such as "craft" appears in several topics, but is not thought worthy of separate discussion even though "designer-craftperson" is a familiar term [thankfully not in UK!] and craft processes still play a role in industry. The index could have overcome the scattering effect but it is so limited that the overall usefulness of the book is significantly reduced.'


'The index is hidden at the front of the book and is too brief to be helpful.'


'Despite its almost encyclopedic content, the book is extremely difficult to use as a reference work because it has a thoroughly inadequate and unreliable subject-and-name index, which one would not expect in a book written by experts on indexing. Subjects and authors discussed in the text are not necessarily found in the index. For example, the works on readability by Fry and Flesch discussed but these names do not appear in the index (or in the list of references). A concept may appear in the index under synonymous terms without grouping or cross-referencing, e.g., "retrieval" and "subject retrieval", "meaning" and "semantics", "automatic indexing" and "indexing". A concept included in the index often does not list all of the relevant pages. The entry for "information needs" lists only two pages, but this topic is discussed importantly on many other pages throughout the book. The format of the index is a long alphabetical listing of single-level terms; lacking both cross-referencing and any hierarchical organisation, it is very hard to browse. The publisher might well consider bringing out a new printing quickly in which these index deficiencies are remedied.'


'An index by company, person, and product is helpful, but some subjects have so many entries, it is impossible to find a specific item ("periodicals" has over 600 entries).'


'The index is presumably computer produced and would have benefited from subdivision of multiple entries.'
INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS


"Finally, investigation of the index proves to be a depressing experience. It is entirely inadequate, despite its length, with entries given in date order under arbitrary and unpredictable headings, showing little evidence of good indexing practice. Even the picture credits suffer from incompleteness, with The Keystone Collection and The Observer listed under "T" since someone has failed to override the computer's normal propensity for first word alphabetical when sorting."


"The index seems to be based chiefly on subheadings rather than on occurrences of ideas. Under "Raman Effect", for example, mention is made of Stokes lines (and anti-Stokes lines), yet the term is not explained anywhere else in the entire encyclopedia, including under "Stokes" (in what the McGraw-Hill calls the "perfect index"). Perhaps with improved word processing power the editors will be able to enlarge the index in the future to include references to explanatory passages for every technical word used."


"The index—seemingly computer-produced—concentrates on keywords rather than themes and topics, and is not as useful as it might be."


"The index, compiled by Linda Webster, is unfortunately rather inconsistent and incomplete. Apparently, each article was indexed separately and then the entries were interfiled. Consequently, the index does not allow one to pursue a specific topic through all of the articles."


"Includes over 175 software products... It would have been nice if the index had referred to the pages in the text instead of the package name as has been done."


"And surely a museum catalogue of this scale today should provide the fullest detail possible of its objects' provenances (inaccurately treated here in both text and index)?"


"I have a major bone to pick with both of these books: neither one of them has a properly cross-referenced index. Recipes are categorized, even alphabetized, but if you forget what group a recipe comes from, you may never find it again. I have a feeling that this may be a misbegotten child of the computer revolution. Word Processor packages come complete with "indexing capability", a complete misnomer; what they mean is "table of content capacity". It certainly isn't as functional. Until someone invents a machine which remembers to index Chowders under soups, and Bashed Neeps under turnips, we'll just have to muddle along."


"An index has been supplied which, sadly, omits such key players as Brig. Gen. Thomas Betts, Eisenhower's contact man for Casey's 1945 operations in Germany, and Brig. Gen. Frederick B. Butler, commander of Task Force Butler, which, with O.S.S. assistance, swept up the Germans after the August 1944 landings in southern France."


"The subject index is arranged by keyword and within each subject the entries are alphabetical by sport/topic. A similar arrangement is used in the author index. Because there are no cross-references (e.g., "Real Tennis, see Lawn Tennis" or "Tennis, see Lawn Tennis"), it is necessary to scan the complete "List of Sports and Topics" to find some entries (e.g., bowling is under "Bowls" and "Tenpin Bowling")."


"The index is crude and totally inadequate."


"The short index does not help to resolve these difficulties. In the main it is comprised of proper nouns."


"... there are author and subject indexes, though the form of entry used for corporate authors render them difficult to locate in the indexes."


"Each entry is numbered, with author and personal subject [sic] indexes. The personal subject index is useful for finding all the entries mentioning a particular author, for there are works that examine several authors' works. However, there is no

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subject index as such, only a list of see also entry numbers at the end of each section. This is slightly annoying, for there is no way to tell from the number what the entry is specifically about, and there can be as many as 100 see also entries listed.'


'The documentation is clear, straightforward, and easily accessible through the table of contents (rather than the index, which is inconsistent and only minimally helpful).'


'Mr Higham... seldom spells a foreign name correctly, often slipping up as well on plain Yankee ones, and is evidently all at sea even in the bright lights of Café and Nescafé Society. Thus, on the very first page of Wallis he writes of "Grace, Lady Dudley, formerly a Radziwill and thus related to the Kennedys by marriage", a howler compounded in the index, where I found "Dudley, Grace, Countess of (Duchess of Marlborough)" con-fusing—doubtless to the disgust of both ladies—the third wife of one Earl with the second wife of another Duke. Enough to make this reviewer treat the intervening 400 or so pages with cautious scepticism.'


'The index is a disappointment because it leans too heavily on personal names at the expense of analytical detail.'


'Indexes have been made for photographer, subject, and repository. Unfortunately, inadequate correlation between these indexes and the Directory's main entries presents problems. For example, the California Museum of Photography has an excellent history of photography collections organized by photographer... the only way to identify these photographers is to scan each entry in the photographer index. Just to complicate matters, some repository descriptions do list photographer's names, but others do not. The subject index presents similar difficulties. Subjects cited in collection descriptions are not always indexed... the subject index has no term for aerial photography. Conversely, index terms are not consistently reflected in the general subject descriptions for each repository.'


'Maps of Queensland and Brisbane would have been welcome additions, especially for foreign readers, and the index could have been considerably more thorough.'


'One serious complaint in this context is the functional inadequacy of the Index. It omits many artists named in the text, and also some page references for those who are listed: e.g., Diego Rivera, mentioned in interestingly different contexts on pp. 66, 77, 95 and 180, is not in this Index.'

Indexes omitted


'A minor quibble is the lack of an index that would help the reader locate desired information more quickly. For example, globes are discussed in both the "Maps" and "Models" chapters.' [only a 'minor quibble'?]


'There is no bibliography, as such, or index.'


'Ms Cockburn's inquiry is so intelligent and its results so fruitful—and its accusations so serious—that the book surely deserved an index. Notes are included at the end, but there are no page references to tell a reader where to find the antecedents of these useful addendums.'


'The only criticism to be made is the lack of guidance to help the reader find his way through it. The index of persons states ommission—and no guide to the figures.'


'The most ardent wallower in nostalgia is likely to wilt confronted by this record of programmes and their originators, region by region, decade by decade. And, for the reader seeking short cuts, there is no helpful index.'


'Unlike its predecessors of 1978 it includes a table of contents, an improvement which it would be worth expanding in subsequent volumes, for, in the absence of an index, it is difficult to find quickly anything that is wanted.'
INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS


‘Each chapter contains a short introduction, but there is no index.’ [an omission that needs repairing]


‘In so well conceived an edition one misses an index to the characters.’


‘These proceedings contain 25 papers . . . followed by 24 appendices with curious numbering running from 1.1 to 22.6 . . . The editor of these papers undoubtedly had a hard task. However, a work so full of facts and with so many acronyms could have benefited from a glossary, and certainly an index would have assisted readers to locate matters of special interest.’


‘However, nothing relieves the frustration ensuing from the chronological arrangement of the lists of “Minor Literary Magazines and Nonliterary Magazines with Literary Contents”. The user must scan the list in search of specific titles—a process made more difficult by the absence of references in the index.’


‘No attempt has been made to improve the monograph by adding an index.’ [for ‘catalogers, classifiers’—and no index?]


‘Many formats and publishers are mentioned and yet no index is provided to help the reader to refer back to specific items.’


‘The book has no index and the translator has made no effort at all to use sex-inclusive language.’


‘It is a pity the publishers did not provide an index.’


‘An index would have been helpful.’ [tomorrow’s material— in a second edition?]


‘It is a pity the publishers did not include an index.’


‘There is no overall bibliography, although some papers include references, and there is no index.’ [Preserving the word is laudable, but an index would prevent its being buried out of sight]


‘There is no index—surely every text, particularly in library and information science warrants an index unless a publisher or an author can persuade us otherwise.’


‘Another frustrating aspect of the format is the difficulty posed in locating a book if you only have limited information. The key is to know the “pattern” or constantly refer to the index. A most valuable addition, besides photographs illustrating the books, and bolder print to distinguish the bibliographic information, would have been an index listing the ABC books by various subjects, types or themes.’


‘At a rough guess—given the lack of a proper index, it cannot be other than rough—just under half of this dictionary consists of mathematics.’


‘There are, however, contributions which do stir creative thoughts. But no indexes to help you on your way.’


‘The presentation is clear and easy to follow, despite too many misprints. An index would be of benefit.’


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'Miss Fraser mentions that the lawn mower was “invented by Budding in the 1830s”. Her neglect to give this benefactor of humanity a first name suggests that he might have been an employee of her family in the old days. (He does not appear at all in the index, and unfortunately there is no article on him in the DNB, so I am still in the dark.)' [We happily offer light: Edwin Budding of Stroud, Glos., patented his ‘machine for cropping or shearing the vegetable surface of lawns, grass-plots and pleasure grounds’ in 1830, a major advance on the first lawnmower, patented by Thomas Plucknett in 1805. (Quickly found per the index of Eureka! how and when the greatest inventions were made, by Edward de Bono; Thames & Hudson, 1974."

Obiter dicta


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'The index entries under health, reading like a medical dictionary, would seem in themselves to provide enough reason for not writing more; Stafford was prey to most of the ills our flesh is heir to, and more.'


'The first chart is a graphic index to the included charts, faced by a text index . . . The good general design and execution might be improved by omitting some of the artistic ornamental touches of boat profiles on the index chart and by printed distance tables instead of tables in ornamental manuscript-like type.'


‘. . . he has put everything in . . . For all this immersion in the period, the most famous opera singer of the time appears in the text as Peach Melba (and in the index as Dame “Peach” Melba).’

* Our warm thanks to those who contributed to this section: Ken Bakewell (Liverpool), Geraldine Beare (Knaphill), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), Barbara Britton (Cambridge), Hilary Davies (Willaston), Frank Dunn (Charlbury), John Farrell (Bristol), Jill Ford (Brighton), Philip Found (Carnforth), John Gibson (Wichenford), Brian Hunter (London), Elizabeth Ingham (London), Cherry Lavell (London), Ben Lipetz (Nassau, NY), David List (Ealing), Alex Noel-Tod (Dereham), H. A. Rydings (Sutton Coldfield), Olwen Terris (London), John Vickers (Bognor Regis), Elizabeth Wallis (Kew), Margaret Wilkins (Lyminge).

Contributions of review extracts welcomed by Norman Hillyer (Charter's, The Avenue, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3AJ). Closing dates 30 June and 30 November for the subsequent issue—the earlier, the kindlier.

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'records reviewed: extracts from press reviews

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The editors chose to use a detailed table of contents as opposed to an index. This reviewer, familiar with LSP, could find his way around the book, but still would have preferred a good index. Tables of contents do not replace good indexes, though they do supplement them.'


'There is no index.' [mentioned as a 'minor'—minor?—irritation]


'Entries range from a few lines to a few pages; treatment is friendly and discursive; there are no footnotes or index, but there are cross-references, and useful short book lists for many subjects... a good index would have helped.'


'Enthralling, demanding, mind-blowing: a good way into the subject for students and non-specialists, but should have an index.'


'Although their Indian interlude forms only a brief part of those astonishingly solid and prolific lives, it is good to have the Indian Diary, for students of Fabianism, of India and of travel writing too. It would have been even better to have had it with an index.'


'One unfortunate thing though is the chapter headings. I feel there are in many instances misleading titles which makes research difficult. It would've been first class with an index of the many names and subjects, but alas...!'


'My other criticism of the format has to do with the absence of an index of scholars. It might be thought that the only conceivable use of such an index would be to boast "macro-indicators" on individual CVs. This is far from the case, Users of an index of scholars. It might be thought that the only conceivable use of such an index would be to boast "macro-indicators" on individual CVs. This is far from the case, Users of an index...'}


'The book has extensive footnotes at the end of each chapter, but could have benefited from both a general and a name index.'