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


'The book's clear organization, excellent index, and abundant references, footnotes, and lists of suggested readings make it useful as a reference manual.'


'There are excellent indexes to products and suppliers with commendable cross-referencing between re-bagged products and the original manufacturer and from old supplier names to the new names. The latter are especially useful with so many recent changes in the industry.'


'A very important element of the work does permit comparison of code provisions. This is a ten-page "Index of Issues". In this index, under headings such as 'advertising', 'confidentiality', 'criminal & illegal conduct', 'fee-splitting', 'solicitation', and 'unauthorized practice', the reader finds references to the relevant provision of each organization's code. This is an invaluable tool for comparing the approaches taken by different professional disciplines to major ethical issues. There is a second index entitled "Index of Professions & Associations." This is a subject index to the individual codes in the compilation. It repeats all of the subject headings in the "Index of Issues", but modifies some of them to make them more appropriate to a particular profession's code. . . The reviewer found the indexes to be very satisfactory.'


'The book includes an impressive bibliography and an excellent index.'


'The index has been compiled by Robert Yorke—or rather the indices [sic], for there are both a general index to the collections giving manuscript numbers, and an index to the introductions to the collection catalogues. Additionally, Mr. Yorke has provided a most useful index of owners, scribes and annotators, with biographical notes.'


'...and an index which is accurate, as it should be, prepared with WORDSTAR.' (well, we have heard of programmes to correct spelling; now we apparently have one to perfect indexes)


'This is the catalogue with the quite remarkable index. For anything—if your eyesight enables you to read and interpret the diminutive key signs—it tells you if it is annual, biennial, or perennial; is hardy or half hardy; suitable for indoors or out; likes sun, shade, or a little of both; is good for cutting, for drying, for tubs, for rockeries; has attractive foliage, is scented, attracts bees and butterflies, or thrives in dry soil—all this without turning the page, a minor miracle of typological condensation.'


'I like it. It is easy to use and the indexes are excellent. Searches can be made in alpha-order, by database, name of publication, geographical area, or subject. . . The geographic index is a good place for someone looking for job opportunities in a given area to start.'
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'The usual problems concerned with classifying records of the industrial heritage are overcome through the index, where, for example, the rare textile machinery in the Woollen Mill at Bridgend, Islay, is re-united with a description of the mill and its water-powered processes in a preceding section of the book.'


'At the end of the book are an Index of Elements (individual words used in the making of the various place-names discussed) and an Index of Personal Names. The latter is particularly useful and gives Welsh or Breton cognates where necessary. Both indexes demonstrate the linguistic importance of place-names in preserving otherwise Cornish words and personal names.'


'...and a skilful final index that leads the young reader through an apparently unlisted entry to behind-the-scenes information.' (hooray! indexes in children's books are pretty rare, more's the pity)


'Sweeping in the dishes and the types of cooking that it covers, and, no small accomplishment, its index is brilliant in both organization and clarity.'


'The 120 pages of decorative borders and artwork are... arranged in six chapters by general subject and there is a comprehensive index which makes specific illustrations easy to find.'


'There is a useful subject index which brings together categories of eponym such as those concerned with clothing or food. Besides its value as a quick reference tool, this is a browser's book for anyone (not just a librarian) who likes picking up odd bits of information with which to impress people!' (the many merits of a good index?)


'Readers will have no difficulty in finding their way in the book for there is an 11 page annotated table of contents at the start as well as an index of 130 pages—and the indexer has justifiably been named in the preface.' (will others kindly copy)


'This active and admired Society has now published a comprehensive index to the contents of the first fifty volumes, covering the years 1930 to 1985. It is presented in two parts. The first is an author and title index. This comprises the remarkable number of well over 1,300 entries. ... Part II, the subject index, consists of nearly 12,000 entries, selected and cross-referenced with a workmanlike thoroughness that will be the envy of many working in the data-research field and become the joy of every scholarly user. Species are given under their common and scientific names. It is a triumph of scholarly indexing. This reviewer has but one regret, namely the anonymity of this professional and superb craftsman/woman.' (hear, hear! Was it by an SI Member?)


'...and rounded off with an invaluable index to the set, surely one of the most useful features of the project, allowing as it does the questing reader to roam at will through the tangled but rewarding thickets of Babbage's extraordinary world.' [index by SI member Janet Godden]


'The more serious user is well provided for by an author index and a subject index, which usefully includes proper names occurring within quotations.'


'... and a series of maps and an excellent index follow at the end of the third volume. Though there is no attempt to standardize the different forms of spelling and transliteration of ancient place and personal names in the text, the index provides cross-references to various forms.'


'... and a good working index. The latter, very helpfully, highlights the names of each of the 26 different soil series in caps throughout, thereby permitting almost instantaneous ease of reference.'


'There is an index of persons and places and an elaborate index of subjects. The latter is especially welcome at a time when some editors seem to regard indexing subjects as supererogatory.' (three cheers!)

'The work is divided into two sections, Portuguese and Spanish, and is completely cross-indexed so that references to any other word in the book, where relevant, are listed boldface in the definition. . . . An invaluable reference work for researchers in race and ethnicity.'


'... the book provides much grist for social as well as literary historians, its usefulness enhanced (and its thoroughness exemplified) by its vastly detailed, helpfully divided, twenty-nine-page index.'


'The text itself ends at page 273 and the remaining one-third of the book is dominated by a huge bibliography of nearly 1,000 items with separate subject and author indexes. The indexes are needed because the bibliography is in no sequence of value but arranged by a strange alpha-numeric code whose meaning is not explained. . . . Another feature I did not care for is the way page numbers are ignored: the contents page merely locates chapters by section number as does the index to the book.'


'Arrangement is by county, with a detailed index taken from the subject fields of the entries supplied, and this provides useful access. There are some inconsistencies, presumably due to the way the information was presented to the NSA: for example, the Camden collection is shown in the main list under Swiss Cottage Library, and there is no direct entry in the index under Camden, merely under London.'


'The subject index looks slight but works fairly well.' (the author, a member of American SI, wonders how her index of 18 pages can be called 'slight')


'However, the order of arrangement of the photography . . . is unclear, following neither the development of the text, time or geographical location. Thank goodness there is at least an index to sort this out, although this in itself is also oddly placed, sandwiched between the end of the main text and a tail-end picture of Ironbridge.'

Indexes censured


'Most disturbing of all, especially for an ALA publication, the index is very limited and has some obvious omissions. For example, although there are at least five mentions of NOTIS in the text, only two are indexed. VTLS and Geac, both appearing as examples in the text, are entirely absent from the index. Although it is true that the author refers to so many systems, if only briefly, that an inclusive index might be exceptionally long, the utility of the book is hampered by the omissions. If the intent was to use references to a particular system only to make a specific point and the author did not expect readers to look up his comments on those systems inclusively, all should have been omitted from the index. Partial coverage is misleading.'


'... confused organization and odd index (to use which you need to know what a site is classified as—"Mesolithic", "horned cairns", "cranogs", "Romans", etc.—before you can look it up . . . to find out what it is!). Not for the bibliographic beginner.'


'The index of "subjects" calls for considerable imagination on the part of the user. It abounds in headings for categories: "collections", for example; "controversial issues, contemporary religious movements"; and "published papers, personal." Either a trained indexer's product or an out-and-out keyword index would seem preferable.' (and this is a '13th edition')


'The Order of Mimesis, a very carelessly produced volume, by the way—misprints . . . a totally inadequate index and a bibliography packed with misinformation . . . will (or should) be read by graduate students and professionals in the various fields referred to in the title and subtitle.'


'The author himself . . . [is] absent from the index. Some people are present only in the index, listed by College and sometimes with their names misspelt—the booby prizes, and evidence of inadequate editing.'

The index needs to be improved. I have already mentioned the absence of "Liberation theology".... The chief discussion of Ebla] (in 75:16) is not listed, although three other references are and it is cross-referenced from one of these. But I may just have been unly. More seriously, as in JBC [the original edition], the reader is warned that "the bibliographies are not indexed". The lack of an index of modern authors affects more than the bibliographies. It not only means that in a particular chapter the reader may have to look through several bibliographies to track down a particular book or writer, but it is impossible to find individual scholars who happen to be mentioned within the text. This is tiresome and I hope that in a reprint the index will be corrected and extended.


A less eccentric bias on which to criticize this unparalleled work of scholarship is that the amount of biochemical and other sciences which it contains is not always apparent from the index. Thus "urea cycle" fails to appear there. But turn to p. 1391 and you will find it within an account of the functions of hepatocytes. Likewise "cytochrome" is missing from the index, but present as part of a section on mitochondria. Even "infection" is absent, although the functions of the immune system in combating transmissible microorganisms are handled with outstanding skill.... The index does not carry abbreviations (not even DNA), which is very odd.


As always with this series of monographs, one feels a little cheated by the thinness of the volume in relation to the price. The one-page index, however, is really a disgrace.


Even a canny reader who makes an initial reconnaissance of a difficult book by skimming its index will be frustrated here; the index is merely an unhelpful alphabetical listing of key terms selected rather casually and inconsistently from the papers, and lacking any grouping or linkage of terms or any hierarchical framework that would suggest an underlying scope and structure for the subject matter in the book.


Yes, you have seen this entry before (under 'Indexes censured'). Indexer 17(1), April 1990, p 67). Reviews mentioning indexes have influence. A Member tells us that a revised reprint of this book was published in 1989 with the note: 'The opportunity to include a more comprehensive index has also been taken.'


The subject index is one of those all-too-familiar indexes that lists a term followed by hundreds of item numbers. The weak subject index and the broad subject arrangement make it difficult to find citations by place. To find references related to women in Mexico, the reader must either browse through all the chapters or go through the 450 entries listed after Mexico in the index. In spite of its failings, this is still an extremely valuable reference work. "(but how much more valuable a professional indexer would have made it)


The guide is arranged alphabetically by author, with a detailed subject index. This unfortunately means the reader has to flip back and forth to find multiple entries. The index headings do not appear to be comprehensive. For instance, there are several popular retellings of the stories in the author section, but I could find no subject heading listing such treatment.


'More of a pictorial encyclopedia than a simple atlas.... One wishes that entries in the index might be somehow "weighted" to indicate which topics are the subject of a two-page spread and which are only spots on a map or mentioned briefly in the text.'


'The index helps one to find places, although not individual chapels, and needs to be used diligently if surnames are to be traced: twenty-one undifferentiated entries for "Smith" are a daunting prospect.'


'It is... hard to find them [references to sites] without a lengthy search of the index where the main entries are not given any prominence.... It is even worse than this, since the index is prefixed by a note "wares not listed", so that in the text, let alone the illustrations, one can find a ware only if it happens to have the name of a site, like Stamford, while Tweed Valley ware is not in the index and it is necessary to search as far as Lindisfarne to find a description.'


'I was confused by the index. Although it occupies thirteen pages, several items have been omitted. For example, neither Philistine nor its toponym Philistia have index entries, but Matthew Arnold, the originator in the 1860s of the modern usage of the word, has.'


'The index is not very good. I looked in it for "supply time", which is discussed in several places in the book; it is not there, nor is there any related term I could think of. "Resource sharing" is included, but not "co-operation", "Save the time of the reader" does not seem a term anyone is likely to look up.'

The index shows every indication of hurried and none too thoughtful compilation. Why, for example, should Janet also be indexed under Joint Academic Network and appear in the list of abbreviations at the front? All three entries refer to a single reference in the text—and for the really uninitiated that single reference will not as it happens enlighten them. Every proper name with a library connection is indexed, no matter how trivial within the context, whilst topics treated at some length are entirely omitted. Charles Brook writes more than a page on his bestseller (a Who’s who of Hull City Football Club) which gets no index entry, in contrast to the passing reference to the Library Association on the last page. *(an untamed computer at work again?)*


‘It is obvious that the information has been compiled by front-line reference librarians who have been frustrated by poorly documented quotation books. The only weakness I can see is the keyword index. . . I had remembered a quotation about Americans’ voting themselves money that included the word “largesse.” I finally located the quotation under the subject heading “Democracy.”


‘A number of other weaknesses have been identified, including a manual which is not always easy to follow, carelessly proof-read, sometimes ambiguous and poorly indexed (for example, four alphabetization errors in only two pages).’


‘The subject index is not as satisfactory as it could be; the user is first advised to see the extended table of contents, since its entries are not repeated in the subject index. . . . There are no cross-references or see-also references alerting the user that the National Security Council entries are listed under NSC, or the Central Intelligence Agency under CIA. One page of the index has been printed twice, and there are annoying typographical errors. True, the table of contents is very detailed, but a good subject index would greatly improve the next edition.’


‘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)”, confusing—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.’


‘Readers of future editions would benefit from a brief biographical section at the end, identifying the many different characters who appear and reappear, along with an expansion of names in the index and careful checking of present entries.’


‘. . . found the index less than accurate.’


‘This is a work of real intellectual craftsmanship and style, with its depth of knowledge clearly expressed. That is not to say it is without fault; the index in particular would benefit from closer attention since it is not always obvious where treatment of a particular topic will occur, and in a work of this nature the reader needs every assistance in picking through a very complex piece of legislation.’


‘The index has always been the one weak spot in Whitaker’s and so it remains—insufficiently full, poorly organised and prone to error—but over the years this feature has become almost endearing. It certainly makes the quiz *(included in the book)* that much harder.’


‘The chemical index appears to have been created by a computer search of the text without any judgment being brought to bear on the result. Thus (and there are many more such examples) “metallic bromine” (!) from p. 327 of the text is listed under “M”.’


‘The index appears to have been assembled by a computer unable to list George Steiner’s name because Gary Steiner had to be listed as well.’
Indexes omitted


'Unfortunately, however, [the editors] have not provided a much needed general index. References to many recurring subjects...figures...titles...are likely to remain hidden from those who lack time to read this valuable book in its entirety.'


'Little effort, however, has been made to make the contents of more general use. There is no index and some methods occur in unexpected places.'


'...has regret: the absence of any kind of index.'


'Although the author has gathered together much useful information, it is presented in a very repetitive manner, some points being worked over three times and this makes it very difficult to get at what is wanted easily [sic]. An index would have been useful. (and might well have exposed the repetition before publication)


'Though expensive and lacking an index, it is very well produced, beautifully illustrated, well edited and well documented. (but should not a well-edited volume have an Index?)


'As always with a book which is a veritable treasure trove of names, I found the lack of an index very frustrating.'


'There is an index of sources, but no word-index at all; so that, unless the user happens to guess that a quotation about Lot's wife is classified under "Nostalgia", it will be hard to find.'


'First, and perhaps most serious, is the absence of any indices [sic]. Having regard to the fulsome praise given to the 1780 hymn book in its 1830 form with the copious indices, this omission greatly reduces the usefulness of this highly concentrated study.'

*The reviewer adds a PS: 'Is there among us one with a computer who could generate an index to this little gem?' (no comment)*


'...would have been improved by stricter editing, to reduce repetition; and by the provision of an index. ... (the index, for one thing, would have shown up the repetitions)


'...the book will wish the selected bibliography (selected for what purpose is not quite clear) had been abandoned in favor of an index. It's strange but true: the book has no index.'


'...the indexing of all three books is less than I found that I needed. They offer indexes of authors and texts, but not subjects. Searching for particular arguments which I dimly remembered was tedious, and I was glad that I had compiled my own indexes of the themes that seemed central as I read. (how many other readers would be as far-sighted as industrious?)


'...Beltrami's book, [Meehan's own] text offers no index—which is a great pity, since there is still considerable value to the record in what both men have to say about the affair.'


'This work, printed from typescript and published by the author himself, set out to fill an obvious gap. To have done so in such a way [having listed a catalogue of shortcomings], and to have done so, moreover, without an index to this extraordinary farrago of potentially useful information, is to have muffed an opportunity. (professionals required in all editorial departments)


'...the 76-page manual, however, is unclear or inaccurate in such areas as printing, downloading, or how best to search for an author, moreover it lacks an index.' (‘Information Service?’)

‘An important work. It contains a table of contents and a list of acronyms but is weakened by the lack of an index.’ (the impact of new technology?)


‘This is a first class, entertaining yet scholarly history, reaching a standard seldom achieved by the professional historian (though it is a pity that there is no index).’


‘The absence of a full index of issuers’ names cannot pass without comment.’


‘The author tells us that his book is intended “first and foremost as an entertainment”: in this he succeeds. All the same, the omission of any bibliography is unhelpful, and the lack of an index a fault.’


‘Perhaps Robert Gray had an overdose of scholarship at Winchester, for his Five Queen Consorts carry neither index nor source notes in their train.’


‘Finally, the volume lacks both a full Index and full integration and internal cross-referencing, which would have helped to underline some of the more important and interesting themes.’


‘It is pleasing to have a scholarly paperback at this price, even if, alas, it lacks an index.’ (which limits the sharing of scholarly fruits with others)


‘... and the editors have not chosen to provide an index.’ (buried treasure again)


‘The production of the book is very good... but why did the publisher not provide (or insist on) an index which would have made this excellent volume so much more useful to the student?’


‘When a second edition is called for, as it undoubtedly will be, may I put in a strong plea for an index? It would make the book even more useful.’


‘Individual contributions are provided with bibliographic references, but, unfortunately, there is no general index that could draw the material presented together for the reader.’ (the common fate of Festschriften, which are supposed to honour someone)


‘ Anyone involved in teaching syntactic theory and all those starting to learn about formal syntax for the first time ought to have a copy. Why isn’t there an index?’ (one is needed for the title alone)


‘Close study and memorization of these chapters will reward the reader. Memorization is almost essential since access to the factual information contained in them otherwise disappears due to the lack of an index for the book.’

Obiter dicta


‘The excitement which greeted the inauguration of the new edition of Schürer’s great work with the new vol. 1 in 1973 was tarnished for many by the fact that it had no index! To have such a treasure chest without a key to unlock it was a sore trial, and matters were made only worse when vol. 2 (1979) could still only point forward—to the happy consummation of the index to follow in vol. 3. When at long last vol. 3 appeared in 1986, it was a cruel blow indeed to discover that it had been judged too large to fit between two covers, and the index was yet further postponed! But at last the eschaton is not just “at hand”, but has actually arrived, in the form of vol. 3 part 2, with a full 120 pages of index. At least we can discover what we have been missing all these years.’ (Yes, fourteen years, no less. Presumably the publishers plotted to lure readers to buy the complete set. But how many potential customers did they lose by fourteen years of discouragement?)

INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

'There is here published for the first time a 1983 paper on "Librarianship as it is practised"... This more serious piece also provides some of the more straightforward entries in Joyce Line's hilarious index, with its invaluable references to "mountains, butter, and catalogue" or "stomach rumbles, contribution to meetings". Another index entry refers to "cooking, backlogs", which all goes to make up a typical sweet-and-sour dish from the master chef.'


'As to Scott's sometimes controversial ideas on Caruso's contemporaries, here he has confined himself to some provocative annotations in the index. Thus Battistini is the "King of baritones", Sammarco is a "front-ranking verismo baritone", and the great De Luca is just "a baritone". If James Joyce were still alive he would be incensed to see John O'Sullivan described as a "provincial tenor", though that is a judgment, like much else in this book, which merely confirms the unimpeachable good sense of most of Michael Scott's writing and research.'


'I appear 34 times in the index to the first two volumes of these diaries. Reviewers usually conceal the fact that as soon as they receive a book they look their own names up. Some keep quiet from creepy notions of humility; others are actuated by their disappointment at never finding themselves mentioned (except in "advanced" novels and then only under transparent pseudonyms, eg, April Windermere). But I taught self-affirmation at the Juilliard in New York.'


'Mr Lichine's encyclopedia, 20 years after it first appeared, remains popular...it gains complexity as it ages, like vintage Bordeaux...the index is subtle and the conversion tables are golden.'


'[the translator] has been Master in College and head of classics at Eliot, and is now the Headmaster of the City of London School: the practical side inseparable from such a career is evident in the usefulness of his introduction and index.'


'Paul Ekins' book went to press just before the Stewardship Unit Trust clones started to appear, therefore readers will not find them in the resource directory at the end of the book. But what is found there is a good bibliography and a revealing index. It reveals that in these media-dominated times personalities are as prominent as issues (most index entries are names); and the issues in the "new economics" are, as the subtitle has it "in the making".'


'The title of this book gives very little clue to its content. Even in its fine index truth does not figure.'


'...and there is nothing more tiring than having to flip through volume after volume to locate a paper one remembers seeing on a previous occasion.'


Our warm thanks to those who have contributed to this section: Sue Anderson (Whitehaven), Jane Angus (Crathie), Ken Bakewell (Liverpool), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), Philip Bradley (Dundee), Barbara Britton (Cambridge), Margaret Cooter (London), Valerie Curtis (Liverpool), Jill Ford (Brighton), Philip Found (Lincoln), John Gibson (Wichensford), Susan Goodman (London), Ray Harrowing (Kidderminster), Philip Hillyer (Edinburgh), Grace Holmes (Caversham), Nancy Humphreys (Berkeley, Calif.), Brian Hunter (London), Steven King (Edgeware), Cherry Lavell (London), Ben Lipetz (Nassau, NY), David List (Ealing), Alex Noel-Ted (Dereham), Hilda Pearson (Cambridge), Christine Shuttleworth (London), Elizabeth Wallis (Kew), Hans Welisch (College Park, Maryland), Rick Wiebe (Langley, Brit. Col.).

Contributions of review extracts welcomed by Norman Hillyer (Charters, 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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