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 index is rather unusual, as it acts as both a conventional index and glossary. Each entry includes a paragraph definition as well as a pointer to its location in the text. This approach saves the reader a tedious search as he or she is looking for a definition.'


'A comprehensive guide to the vast array of foreign cultural figures who gathered in the city in the 1920s... An excellent index and bibliography are included.'


'A subject index based on keywords submitted by each of the authors is a useful feature...'


'What happened between the child’s death and the mother’s conviction [22 years later] is the foundation of this fascinating, exhaustively documented book ... The index, moreover, is a professional touch, most useful for such a complex cast of characters over such a long period.'


'As would be expected in a book from a quality publisher there is a detailed index to the contents.'


'Final thought. If ever there was an indexer who ought to be named, publicly thanked and garlanded, it is the compiler of the vast modern Index to this book. Indexers are a forgotten and neglected lot, to whom we all owe our mental balance. This Index is a model and a marvel: and incidentally it shows at a glance how Stone’s has been made to keep abreast of the rum times we live in—it has entries for hijacking, kidnapping, hostage-taking, acupuncture, and astrology, plus a multitude of new arrivals in the language. Don’t look in it for the Poll Tax. It deals with that more detachedly as “The Community Charge”... (well, we are in a position to name and publicly thank, if not to garland, the indexer: Robert Spicer, SI member)


'There are plenty of helpful “see” references, a subject index and an acronymn index. This last feature is particularly useful as so many construction organisations are commonly known by acronym.' (including this publisher: CIRIA = Construction Industry Research & Information Association)


'The directory includes excellent indexes, among them the controlled subject index.'


'... an excellent index.'


'The only disadvantage may be the relatively high price, but, thanks to the indexes, this commentary will prove relevant to the study of other parts of Scripture where words and topics recur.'


'It is pleasing to see a glossary that doesn’t look as though it has been produced solely by computer without human “interference”. The alphabetico-specific index is well laid out and adds to ease of reference.'
INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS


'A detailed index and abundant use of cross-references help the user to find related material.'


'The commentary's usefulness as a research tool is enhanced by fifty-four pages of appendixes, bibliography, and indexes... The indexes are exhaustive, listing (1) passages cited (OT and Apocrypha, OT Pseudepigrapha and other Jewish literature, NT, early Christian and the ancient church, and Greek and Latin authors), (2) Greek words, (3) subjects and (4) modern authors (up to 1972).'


'Has a very useful index to the whole set that ends the volume...'


'A detailed index of the sort that librarians have come to expect in Greenwood books completes the work.'


'It has three helpful features not found in all such directories: a detailed list of acronyms, a subject index, and an index with full addresses of all the members of the various associations, unions and other bodies mentioned throughout the volume.'


'Is clearly laid out and even has an index so that someone wanting to know what census returns are in the library can quickly find the relevant pages.' (a booklet of only 23 pages, too! other publishers, please copy)


'The records are in MARC format, and are indexed and searchable in a variety of ways: as exact terms or in browsable lists; with subdivisions or without; by keywords; and through the use of Boolean operators. A keyword search while in "browse" mode yields an alphabetical list of headings containing one's search term. A heading identified by an exact search may be viewed in its place in the standard headings list through the use of the "view context" function key. This ability to locate hard-to-identify headings and then display them in the context of related headings is a particularly attractive feature for cataloguers hunting for an appropriate subject heading, or for reference librarians attempting to identify subject headings matching a user's interests.'


'There were, of course, other factors behind the pre-war success of The Golden Bough. The sheer bulk of the third edition, a monument to encyclopedic knowledge, gave it instant authority—and its 400-page index turned it into an easy reference work, for the whole of world culture.'


'Because it has a useful index and provides a good survey of the most recent historical scholarship, the book should be in every college and university library.'


'Indexes of titles, publishers and locality ("topography") together with an excellent page layout and consistently clear typography add to ease of reference.'


'Ken Bakewell's book is a cross between a textbook and a series of review articles in that it contains almost 600 references and, as one would expect from the President of the Society of Indexes, an excellent index.' (but of course)


'Templates useful for libraries... for Apple II, Macintosh, or MS-DOS computers... The index is an alphabetical list of template applications further defined by systems and is very helpful for the user with more than one system available.'


'Each section is preceded by an alphabetical index and a map for that section. The book is also furnished with a general index and an index to castles by family name. When one considers that there are extensive cross-references from little-known to better-known castle names, a glossary of terms used and a list of words of Irish origin used in describing castles, one appreciates the great pains James N. Healy has taken to ensure that the information in the text is as accessible to the reader as it could possibly be. Mr Healy is to be heartily commended. The lack of a good index renders many otherwise excellent works of local history practically useless for reference purposes.'

'I shall certainly be using the excellent set of indexes to refer to many of these discussions on particular passages.'


'The book is well indexed, and should become an invaluable handbook and point of first reference.'


'The directory is well-formatted with clear consistent entries, straightforward alphabetical sequences in the core sections and good indexes. It is easy to use in a hurry.'


'... and, finally, a keyword index incorporating product names, subject areas and special collections. The layout is clear and simple with each main entry nicely spaced and easy to consult as is the subject index which has product names and special collections printed in upper case to distinguish them from subject areas.'


'There are tables of statutes and statutory instruments, and a comprehensive index. Despite its legal content the book is easy to read. It is essentially practical and has been designed as a reference book for busy people.'


'There are 150 pages of solid text arranged in 11 chapters with a torturous [sic] footnoting system and a most useful index. You can use the index to rank the heroes of the New Archaeology by how often they get bashed, without having to read the text.'


'... has a very good index of names and subjects.'


'The index is of a size which should in itself guarantee a respectable sale. (an accolade indeed!)


'There are useful reading lists at the end of every chapter and two good indexes.'

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### Two Cheers!

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<td>'Nielsen trumpets the importance of good indexing for hypertext &quot;navigation&quot;. He then produces an extensive but eccentrically incomplete index that does, however, include useful references directly to the bibliography.'</td>
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<td>'Short biographical sketches of some 4,500 trappers, traders, cowpokes, marshalls, chiefs, scouts, miners, heroes, and desperados from the American frontier... Despite some inconsistencies in the indexing (why an entry for historians but not cattlemen or ranchers?) this encyclopedia is an extremely welcome addition to the shelf of biographical dictionaries.'</td>
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<td>'A random check of the index revealed some omissions, but it includes adequate coverage of the text, though place-names on maps are not included. Cross-references are used sparingly, so one cannot depend upon this convention to find information.'</td>
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<td>'There is an author index and a detailed subject index, which must be used carefully. For example, there are separate entries for the ballad “Mary Hamilton” and for the “Queen’s Maties,” with no “see also” references. The reader has to look under “Child 172” to determine that they are referring to the same ballad.'</td>
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<td>'The general index, which includes names and subjects, and the chronological index would have been more useful if the citations had been to item numbers and not to page numbers.'</td>
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<td>'An index of specific problems and general matters directs the reader to numbered examples. Another index gives rule numbers in AACR2 order and the appropriate numbered examples. These indexes appear at the front of the book, between the preface and the body of the text. This arrangement, while conceptually reasonable, may be confusing to those who do not expect back-of-the-book type indexes to be found at the front. In addition to these general indexes, each chapter has its own alphabetical index to topics—again at the beginning.'</td>
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| 'The compilation is indexed though almost too closely, e.g., the only entry for “open casket” refers to an article on autopsy
which states that resistance to an autopsy often occurs because of the fear that an open-casket funeral will not be feasible.


... all to be found by means of the excellent indexes of names, places, and occupations. There has, unfortunately, been a failure to index the introduction, thereby obscuring many important names and subjects.


'The 26-page index, excellent for names and places (and revealing no reference to this Society [B&G Arch. Soc.] despite its long battles to preserve Blackfriars and Llanthony Priory, or to Roland Austin), requires persistence and patience to negotiate a maze of cross-references to subjects which sometimes end in frustration.'


'A directory of about 1,600 agencies that are sources for moving-image material... the subject index gives only the source name, not the place, so the source-name index must be used to find a page number—cumbersome, but still workable.'


'There are indexes of topics and names, both excellent, though unfortunately the pagination seems to have been changed after they were completed.' (so what price excellence?)


'The book concludes with three indexes: a creators index, which lists the photographers or entities that produced or assembled the images in each collection; a forms and processes index, which locates examples of physically distinct types of photographs (such as albumen photoprints, or collodian wet plate photonegatives); and a subject index, created using Library of Congress topical terms for graphical materials... Indexing is keyed in all three indexes to collection number, not page. This only slightly impairs the usefulness of the indexes.'

'An author index refers the reader to citations in the text as well as in the bibliography. The subject index (3 pages) is less satisfactory. Under “Statistical analysis software” there is a reference to pages “45–292,” some 92 per cent of the book! Under the same heading there is a see also reference to “the Names of specific packages; and microcomputers.” Some of the statistical packages mentioned in the text are entered directly in the subject index, others appear under the subheading “individual packages” under “Statistical analysis software,” while others do not appear at all. Only two microcomputers... appear in the index.'


'More careful scholarship and editing would have improved the book. It is padded by 50 rambling pages of patients autobiographies. An article published in 1986 is not really “in press”. Authors' names are misspelt and initials are wrong. There is no author index. The subject index is skimpy.'


'And the index is spattered with further infelicities, such as two McLoeds (sic) and Gordon Alexander for the famed Aberdeen Alexander Gordon.' (obviously not famed enough)


'Arrangement by subject rather than alphabetically is not universally popular among serials librarians. Such an arrangement may have its merits, but it must be backed by adequate and reliable indexes which allow searches by other methods. In the face of aggressive competition from Ebsco's Serials directory, Bowker will need to reappraise their indexing procedures very carefully if Ulrich's is to maintain its “tradition of excellence in serials information”.'


'... but the book is marred by a poor index, an incomplete bibliography, no work-list and no explanations in the body of the text for the many illustrations.' (where was the editor?)


'A more comprehensive index would have aided reference to the text.'


'Another complaint: the index is deplorable. I counted over 40 people whose courtesy titles, knighthoods, baronetcies and peerages are ignored. This is only important because it makes recognition difficult. For instance, Diana Mosley is styled Lady Mosley while her husband is described starkly as Oswald Mosley. Lord Furness is styled a baron, his wife is called Thelma Furness. Ziegler has an unfortunate habit of dropping names. He refers to the late Lady Stanley in the text and index as...'

Indexes censured

Lady Sybil (Portia) Cadogan, the daughter of Earl Cadogan and finally as Lady Edward Stanley. These facts are only interesting because every one of them is incorrect.'


'This is a fine book, marred only by its poor index.'


'The biographies, which are presented alphabetically, are accompanied in each case by an illustration and are followed by valuable bibliographies and lists of sources; usefully, a chronological arrangement of the subjects is also provided and (less usefully) a very brief index.' (ha'p'orth of tar department again?)


'Each section is followed by selective lists of relevant groups and organisations, journals, books, reports and articles. There is a certain amount of repetition in these lists, which take up almost a third of the book but are not indexed or cross-referenced to the main text.' (a good index would have shown up the repetition)


'Two indexes are supplied. The first is merely an alphabetical list of titles of slight value (45 begin "UK"). The second is a far from satisfactory subject index, with inconsistent entries, inadequately cross-referenced and omitting many subjects. For instance: there is no entry for brandy, until one tries cognac, which leads to Spirits bulletin, yet brandy is annotated as a subject in Scottish spirits report; Grampian and Hampshire have sub-headings for education. Northumberland has not, yet the annotations for all three include education. Such inadequacy is pervasive, the index is badly organised and fails almost totally to provide the "easy access" promised in the blurb... The venture is well worthwhile and it is to be hoped that a third edition will appear in 1995 with a closer coverage and a properly organised subject index.'


'An author index and a short subject index follow the text. The subject index is a bit tricky; while there is no entry for "Texas," there are several references to Texas under the entry for Crockett.'


'Author and title indexes are provided; unfortunately, many book reviews are indexed only under the author of the review article, and there are no cross references within the text from the book citation to citations of reviews.'


'The index, probably not his own work, is faulty. I am not there, though my book on Hemingway is reviewed. Writers who review are in the habit of consulting indexes to see if they are included, not out of vain glory but to cushion the shock of being mentioned in the text.'


'There are no cross-references in the text and only a few in the indexes. Cross-references should be used more abundantly in the index, for instance, linking up Inuit, Eskimo, and Polar Eskimo.'


'Unfortunately, it is not well organized... The reader is left largely to the search-by-scan method of fact retrieval. The index is somewhat uneven too. One might expect a book comparing high-density storage media to have an entry for recording density. There is no listing under density, capacity, recording density, or recording capacity. How about media characteristics? This term points to an undifferentiated thirty-six page range. If you look under areal density, you start to get somewhere, but this seems an unlikely first choice of access point.'


'The index is no help, though it has to be said that it is more penetrable than those in other recent V.C.H. volumes.'


'For the busy house officer seeking to check on the management of a sick child an essential component of a book such as this is a comprehensive index. Unfortunately the index of this edition does not match the quality of the text: it refers to only one of the descriptions of the treatment of cerebral oedema (not the most comprehensive one) and includes Janeway lesions while omitting to mention either hypotension or hypertension.'


'It is perhaps strange that the index of a work on European regional development should find no place for expressions such as "tertiary sector", "tourism" or "retirement migration".'


'The index would be more serviceable if it included the titles of the books themselves rather than merely the names of the authors.'

"...and the author index and subject index are not detailed enough. Entries vary in amount of annotation, with little indication as to how far the book or article goes in tackling a subject."


"Access points to the volume are minimal. For example, the section on the use of contraceptives in cats is indexed under feline pill, the same phrase as the paragraph heading in the chapter, but not under more common subject headings like contraceptives or birth control. The photographs... and other valuable illustrations are not identifiable from the index."


"The Index of Artists is rendered useless by the absence of any page numbers."


"More thorough indexing of the wealth of material on wildlife, natural vegetation, weather and climate, and other aspects of the natural setting would have been helpful for readers interested in the region's natural history."


"The index... seems to be keyed to the maps and thus ignores the accompanying essays. Try using the index to locate references to Sam Houston, surely a towering figure in the history of Texas. One reference is given, to map 39... while Houston does figure prominently in the accompanying essay, he is also mentioned in the text accompanying maps 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28... Remember the Alamo? James Bowie, William Barrett Travis and Davy Crockett, names inseparable from that story and appearing in the essay, do not appear in the index."


"A further problem is the very inadequate index. To give one example, this does not refer to sexual abuse, although this is to some extent dealt with under psychological disorders."


"Except for its index, there is little to complain of in the documentation and much to praise. Regrettably, the index to the User's Guide is a misery, obviously the handiwork of amateurs and somewhat of an irony considering the name of the program."

* * *

"And, finally, here's the latest guide to adult education courses in (yes) Islington. 'The index unfortunately omits any page numbers, except in the case of model engineering (page 37). That page, disappointingly, turns out to contain details of classes in (a) millinery and (b) sewing and knitting with English language.'

—Guardian, 4 Oct 1990

Indexes omitted


"It lacks an index, which limits its use as a work of reference."


"Not one of the volumes examined by this reviewer boasted an index, a somewhat infuriating omission in specialized publications that are for reference as much as for reading. It would be easy for an author of a camera-ready manuscript to index it [oh, would it?], and the extra production cost would be minimal."


"With this reservation, however, and the inexplicable absence of any index, this is an excellent and very readable study of Calvin. (hidden treasure once more)


"At the beginning I must complain that there is no map of any kind, and no index. The scholarship and expertise of the parochial entries mean that the volume is not just for the use of the indolent amateur. The 1974 extension of the county of Oxfordshire makes this lack more significant—in particular for anyone long domiciled in "old" Oxon. I have a personal interest in indexes, but suppose that an earnest enquirer with an interest in (for the sake of argument) the monuments to the Dormer family in Oxfordshire set about his task, how would he achieve it? The same would apply to an impassioned searcher for the work of, say, Woodyer."


"Who wrote 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer'? Who was the ex-paratrooper, left-handed, who played a right-handed guitar upside-down throughout his career?" [questions posed in publisher's press release] Unfortunately, as the volume has no index, it would actually be impossible for someone without prior knowledge to find the answers to such questions without systematically wading through the 875 pages until stumbling upon them. (And in case you were wondering, the answers are Johnny Marks and Jimi Hendrix.)


"...sadly indexless..." (and a book of such a length, too)
INDEXES REVIEWED: EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

'The lack of an index means that some of the fascinating information in this book may be lost.' (Facts Not on File)

'There is no index to What's in a name?, which is as extraordinary as it is infuriating. The thinking behind that may be the same as that of another author I recently came across, responsible for a little Dictionary of House Names. When I pointed out mildly that it was usual for a dictionary to be in alphabetical order, she said that with such an arrangement readers would merely look for their own house name in the bookshop, and then not bother to buy the book.'

'Anthony Meyer is one of history’s footnotes. Had he not with saintly foolhardiness run against Margaret Thatcher for the leadership of the Conservative Party last year he might not even be that... Sir Anthony has now produced a footnotey kind of book. There is no index—a particularly sad omission since the index might well have contained the most gripping feature of the book: the entry for the Prime Minister.'

'He is called Tom [another publisher], but I cannot for the life of me imagine who this might be. Brian’s current publishers, Messrs Hodder & Stoughton, have stingly omitted to supply an index, so it is impossible to check surnames.'

'I have only one teeny-weeny fault to find with it: Why is there no index? (teeny-weeny?)'

'And, though he supplies a wealth of annotations and bibliography, an index is glaringly absent.'

'...from about 1870 to the end of the Second World War. Unfortunately the volume is not indexed and the arrangement is by personal name.'

'The manual is a laser-printed tome which sadly lacks a thorough index... The lack of index does it no justice as the more you use it, the more you find yourself wanting to use it: having to search through for addresses or references really should have been taken into consideration.'

'Unfortunately, the volume contains no index, thus making it much less useful as a reference source than would otherwise be the case. (so even the text is an elusive quarry)

'I will get my usual complaint about any show business biography out of the way immediately: No Index. Any bear or human who has mixed on intimate terms with crowned heads, the cream of the entertainment world and Barbara Woodhouse, besides being introduced handsomely by George Harrison ("Sooty is proof that sanity is still with us") deserves the compliment of being accorded an accurate reference file, besides which, human nature being what it is, the number of people who will not make a purchase if they cannot find themselves listed must make sizeable inroads on the sales potential.'

'While Johnson's work is not definitive, its relative comprehensiveness and irrefutable enthusiasm for its subject will satisfy most Python fans... No index.' (some fans easily satisfied!)

'Should such a complex publication [not] have an index?'

'There is an index of names and titles mentioned in the chronology. Unfortunately, there is no subject index, so a reader cannot find reference to a specific type of entertainment or to geographic areas.'

Obiter dicta

'It is a characteristic of Hardy’s letters that their index should so unfailingly raise expectations which the texts themselves fail to satisfy. Scanning the list of correspondents, your eye alights on famous names—on Virginia Woolf writing to offer good wishes, on Ezra Pound, even, submitting poems for comment—only to find the replies transfixed by the most mundane courtesies'.

'Lucy Hughes-Hallett... has mulled her topic thoroughly and done perhaps all the Cleopatra research that can humanly be done. The "F" section of her index, for example, reveals not only Freud and Foucault, Flaubert and Anatole France, as one might expect, but Fulvia (Antony’s first wife) and Flataetea (a character in Shaw’s Cleopatra play), Antonia Fraser (author...
of "Warrior Queens" and "The Weaker Vessel") and Eddie Fisher (third husband of warrior queen Elizabeth Taylor, father of warrior princess Carrie Fisher and singer of "Oh My Papa")."


"The foreword by Larry D. Benson offers entertaining reading about Whiting and his method of compiling the collection of proverbs, his recycling of unused pages of blue books, and index cards reused four times for different collections."


"He was, on the whole, not a nice man. At the end of Laurence Bergreen's new biography one can see the index of the unpopularity of a popular song writer. "I'm Irving, insecurity, irritability and tantrums of, self-absorption of. . . ."


"The index is confined to personal names and place-names; the inclusion of thematic entries would have resulted in an intractable Slough of Despond." (from the 'Editorial Principles' in the Introduction: well, we have met some excuses in our time. But never mind the readers.)


"Shaw's eye for women is well documented here, including a bizarre afternoon in 1939 when he and H. G. Wells competed for the attentions of the former Miss Hungary, Zsa Zsa Gabor. An entry in the index for Greta Garbo raised excited expectations—surely not her as well—until I discovered that it referred only to a journalist's observation that Shaw "hates to be interviewed as if he were Greta Garbo."

*

"Finally, inexpensive, dedicated software can reduce the time needed to prepare an index for a major monograph from about three weeks to three days, which should make this valuable feature a mandatory addition . . . Unfortunately, indexes are too seldom included in archaeological reference works. Indexing is a tedious and expensive process which cannot be completed until all the pages have been laid out and the work is otherwise ready to go to press. When a publication may already be over budget and behind schedule, it is understandable that this step is often omitted."

—Alaric Faulkner, Historical Archaeology 24, 1990

"In the index of Lady Elizabeth Anson's seminal work, Party planners book—the complete guide to entertaining stylishly and successfully (1985), between "stains, treatment of" and "suppliers, see also caterers" comes an entry titled "suicide attempts". Turning to page 142, one learns that Lady Anson has little time for people who attempt suicide at parties. "People who stage suicide attempts hysterically or as a means of emotional blackmail will, unhappily, often choose a party for the gesture, as it ensures a huge audience and plenty of excitement," she says, adding, "if you find your guest with a half-empty bottle of weedkiller . . . do not panic." Tactfully, she does not add, "your gardener will be able to replenish the bottle in the morning"."

—Craig Brown, Times Saturday Review, 6 Aug 1990

"'King Research noted the way in which NFAIS [National Federation of Abstracting & Information Services] readers find the articles they read: 40% of the readings are discovered by browsing; 18% are referred by a colleague; 11% are cited in another article; and about 25% are found through an index. Secondary products and services clearly have a significant effect on scientific and technical reading.'

—Elwood K. Gannett, NFAIS Newsletter 31 (2), April 1989

Our warm thanks to those who contributed to this section: Ken Bakewell (Liverpool), Judy Batchelor (Ealing), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), Barbara Britton (Cambridge), Valerie Curtis (Liverpool), Jill Ford (Brighton), Gerald Fowler (Wellington, NZ), Sue Goodman (London), Steven King (London), Cherry Lavell (London), Ben Liféz (Nassau, NY), Sally Phillips (London), Jean Macqueen (Slough), Richard Raper (Hove), Sheila Seacroft (Durham), Christine Shuttleworth (London), Robert Spicer (Bristol) Elizabeth Wallis (Kew), Rick Wiebe (Langley, Brit. Col.), Cecelia Wittmann (Santa Monica, Calif.).

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.

Pax with PAIS

We apologise to Public Affairs Information Service, Inc. for quoting in our previous issue (page 141) a review from College & Research Libraries stating that PAIS on CD-ROM. Version 1.0 lacks an index. This statement (and others in that review) is incorrect, and was retracted in a letter in a subsequent issue of that journal. PAIS assure us that the index is a very good one, and that 'It would be inconceivable that PAIS, an abstracting and indexing service that has been in business since 1914 and has set standards in indexing that other organizations are measured by, would produce a publication without an index'.

We not only apologise, but cheer.

Introspective index?

If onomatopoeia describes speech whose sound reflects its sense, what might we call index entries that are apposite to themselves? For instance, three in Elementary education, by Mark O'Donnell (Knopf, 1985):

Babble, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 93, 104
Anarchy, 9, 45, 12, CLX, 3, 3, 3, 3 [sic; and original entry out of alphabetical order]
Curiosity, see all entries.