

# One index or two? Some observations on integrated indexes to classical Greek texts

J. H. Bowman

Some books have always defied the general rule that Greek words should go in a separate index from roman. A combined index can be based on roman or Greek alphabetical order, or a mixture of the two. The principal features and problems of the different methods are described, concluding with a statement of some of the advantages of an integrated index.

It seems to be generally assumed that if Greek words in a book have to be indexed it is better to put them in a separate index than to interfile them with words in the roman alphabet. Wellisch, for example, is quite specific on this point: 'Under no circumstances should headings written in Greek be interfiled with Roman-alphabet headings as if they had been Romanized. Nothing is being gained in terms of space by such a farrago, and users who know Greek may have some difficulty finding what they are looking for.' This overrides the other general rule that as far as possible a book should have only one index. Wheatley was a great proponent of the single index, but unfortunately he has nothing to say about this specific problem in his book;<sup>2</sup> it may well be that in his day it was not thought unusual to include Greek in a roman-alphabet index.

As one of the 'users who know Greek' I have long known that although most books adhere to the principle of separation there have always been a considerable number that do not. The purpose of this article is to look at some of the different treatments that have been adopted, and to consider whether there are circumstances in which it is more useful to interfile everything in one sequence. My examples are almost all taken from editions of classical texts; the indexes to such works are of course usually indexes to the *commentary* rather than to the text itself. To avoid repetition, throughout this article I shall use the term 'roman' to mean words printed in the roman alphabet; in many cases these are Latin, not English, but the principle is the same.

Figure 1 shows the Greek alphabet, with the names of the letters and their roman equivalents. The fourth column shows the normal transliteration of the Greek into roman. However, it should be noted that the normal English equivalent of *v* (*upsilon*) is *y* (e.g. all those

A	$\alpha$	<i>alpha</i>	a
B	$\beta$	<i>beta</i>	b
Γ	$\gamma$	<i>gamma</i>	g
Δ	$\delta$	<i>delta</i>	d
E	$\epsilon$	<i>epsilon</i>	e (short)
Z	$\zeta$	<i>zeta</i>	z
H	$\eta$	<i>eta</i>	e (long)
Θ	$\theta$	<i>theta</i>	th
I	$\iota$	<i>iota</i>	i
K	$\kappa$	<i>kappa</i>	k
Λ	$\lambda$	<i>lamda</i>	l
M	$\mu$	<i>mu</i>	m
N	$\nu$	<i>nu</i>	n
Ξ	$\xi$	<i>xi</i>	x
O	$\omicron$	<i>omicron</i>	o (short)
Π	$\pi$	<i>pi</i>	p
P	$\rho$	<i>rho</i>	r
Σ	$\sigma$	<i>sigma</i>	s
T	$\tau$	<i>tau</i>	t
Υ	$\upsilon$	<i>upsilon</i>	u
Φ	$\phi$	<i>phi</i>	ph
X	$\chi$	<i>chi</i>	ch
Ψ	$\psi$	<i>psi</i>	ps
Ω	$\omega$	<i>omega</i>	o (long)

Figure 1. The Greek alphabet

words beginning with *hypo-*) because this is how it was converted into Latin; more recent borrowings, on the other hand, use *u*, so that we refer to 'hubris', not 'hybris'. This illustrates one of the problems of combined-alphabet indexes. For the convenience of Greekless readers, in the examples which follow I have transliterated the Greek words in square brackets after their occurrence. I have also omitted the location references because these are irrelevant to the point at issue.

In order to examine the different methods of indexing I looked at a sample of some 100 of my own collection of classical Greek texts. Elementary books could not necessarily be expected to have an index (many of them have a Vocabulary which partly fulfils this function), and it was therefore no surprise that 17 out of 116 did not. The remainder can be broken down as follows:

separate Greek index	59
Greek index only	5
roman index only	10
Greek interfiled with roman	25

The last category is particularly interesting, because it can be subdivided into three classes:

1. roman order with Greek interfiled
2. Greek order with roman interfiled
3. semi-interfiled.

I shall now describe each of these in turn.

### *Roman with Greek interfiled*

Ten books in the sample fall into this category. The roman entries predominate, but Greek entries are interfiled with them. The proportion of Greek can vary from less than half a dozen words in the whole index to more than half of the whole. In some cases there is also a separate index of Greek words, those included in the roman index being more subject entries than word entries and the roman index often being given some such title as 'Matters'. A striking example of this method is to be seen in Theophrastus, *The characters of Theophrastus*, ed. R. G. Ussher (London: Macmillan, 1960), where the following sequences can be found:

*ἀδολεσχία* [adoleschia]  
*A Drunkard's Day* (Lycon)  
*Advice to a Son* (Osborne)  
*ἀηδής* [aēdēs]  
*ἀηδία* [aēdia]  
 Aeginetans

Character-writing  
*χάρις* [charis]  
 Charon  
 Chaucer  
*χαῖνος* [chaunos]

and most surprisingly:

*ἀβροδίατος ἀνὴρ* [habrodiaitos anēr]  
 Hair-cutting  
 Hair-styles  
*ἀλαδε μύσται* [halade mustai]  
 Hall, Joseph

Here it can be seen that the 'rough breathing' (') which can occur on an initial vowel and which represents 'h' is taken into account in the filing. Few indexes are full enough for me to say whether this happens elsewhere, but so far it seems to be unique to this unusual index. It is of course quite logical, because all Greek words beginning with the rough breathing have come into English with an H (*hypo-* again, for example); nevertheless it seems strange to see words beginning with *alpha* appearing amongst the H-words. This index also illustrates two other problems of this kind of arrangement: *chi*, which comes near the end of the Greek alphabet, is to be looked for under C because of the way it is transliterated; and in some cases, where a sequence of Greek words appears together, they may appear to be in the wrong order because the order is roman (e.g. in Figure 2 the word *τριγλή* [triglē] would in Greek precede the two words that it follows). *Kappa* is treated as K, not C. *Upsilon* is filed as y, thus retaining the conventional transliteration. For all its peculiar appearance the index is a *tour de force*, splendidly covering the unusually wide-ranging commentary on the text, and almost faultlessly filed letter-by-letter despite the strange-looking sequences. (Note too that initial articles in titles are not ignored in filing or transposed.)

Another work, not a Greek text but exemplifying the same kind of index, is George Jennison's *Animals for show and pleasure in ancient Rome* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937). This uses almost the same system as the Theophrastus, except that here *kappa* is treated as C, despite the fact that there are several English words beginning with K in the index. We therefore find:

*cavea*  
*cercopithecus pyrrhonotus*  
*κερκοπίθηκος* [kerkopithekos]  
*cebus*  
*κερκεθαλίς* [kerkethalis]  
*cepus*  
*cervus*

If this has a purpose, it is to file the Greek originals near their Latin translations; it may of course be accidental.

In other cases the Greek words predominate even though roman alphabetical order is used. This treatment, taken to excess, can be seen in Aristophanes, *Aristophanis comoediae undecim*, ed. H. A. Holden (Cambridge: J. W. Parker, 1848). Almost every entry is

- τετραδισταί: 232  
 Thackeray: (*Henry Esmond*) 179  
 θαύματα: 25, (Plato's view of) 74; 230  
 θέα: (= 'theatre performance') 67, 100, 257; (= 'spectacle') 263  
 Theatre: 23, (its hard seats) 25, 50; (special places for generals) 25, 67; (boys admitted) 25, 100; (possible free showings) 25, 257; 27, (προεδρία granted) 67, (reserved seats for officials) 67, (reserved seats for distinguished foreign visitors) 100, (tickets) 100; 191  
 θεατροπώλης: 257  
 θεατρώνης: (= ἀρχιτέκτων?) 257  
 Theban: (δαφνηφορία) 138  
 Themistocles: (variant for Theophrastus in Jerome) xi; 133, 186, (his μικρολογία) 188  
 Theocritus (quoted or referred to): 49, 69, 87, 103, 118, 140, 145, 146, 154, 156, 157, 234, 261, 263  
 Theognis (quoted or referred to): 37, 162, 247  
 Theophrastus: (not the author of the *Preface*) ix, (work on 'virtues'?) xi, 4; (left no dependants) xii, (his authorship of *Characters* unquestioned) 3, (his eloquence) 3, (Cicero's opinion of) 3, (work on Comedy) 5, (his *Poetics*) vii, 5; (as a mimic) 6, (work on 'the Absurd') 6, (similarities with Aristotle) 8 ff., (his *Ethics*) 9, (views on the benefit of poetry to orators) 11, (dates) 14, (fate of his library) 14, (style) 20 ff., (work on proverbs) 22, (parentage) 24, 110; (difference from English imitators) 23, 26; (influence on literary *Character*) 30, (his *περί κολακείας*) 44, (carefulness in dressing) 57, (teacher of Dinarchus, similarities with latter) 10, 76; (his description of a barber's) 115, (definition of ἀναισθησία) 125, (work on dreams) 152, (work on epilepsy) 157, (attack on Alexander) 196, 216; (his politics) 216, (his *περί βασιλείας*) vii, 216; (his *περί ζώων*) 239, (his will) 265, (his *περί πλούτου*) 266  
*The Parson's Looks* (Burns): 243  
 Theseia: 179  
 θέσεις: (attributed to Theophrastus) 10  
 Theseus: 179, 224, 225, 228  
 Thessalian: (witches) 146  
 Thessaly: 142  
 Thieves and Thieving: 76, 95, 98, 100  
 Thirty, The: 222, 225, 267  
 Thomas Magister: 204  
 Thracian: (name) 237, 239; (women) 239, (men) 240  
 Thrasy-machus: 112  
 Θρήτρα: (slave name) 238  
 Thucydides (quoted or referred to): xi, xii, 21, 44, 57, 70, 89, 93, 95, 118, 122, 126, 128, 135, 139, 148, 159, 160, 166, 174, 181, 185, 187, 194, 198, 199, 202, 203, 208, 209, 218, 219, 223, 224, 225, 227, 228, 242, 247, 250, 258, 264  
 θύμος: (= 'garlic'?) 56  
 Tibullus: 138, 142, 147, 155, 157, 179  
 Timaeus: 153, 230  
 Timber: (Macedonian export) 199  
 'Timidus': (ἦθος or 'notatio' in rhetoric) 10, 28  
 Timocreon of Rhodes: 133  
 Title, The '*Characters*': vii, 27  
 τοκισαί κατά μικρόν ἐπὶ πολλῶ: (in Aristotile) 76  
 Tombs: (in superstition) 148  
 Torches: (placed in front of temples) 53  
 Torch-race: 228, 229  
 Trades: 24  
 Tradesmen: (opinion of) 80  
 Tragedy: 6  
*Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*: 141  
 Trello Vouni (Hymettus): 68  
 Τριβαλλοί: 61  
 Tribes: 54, 186, 219, (representation on juries) 222  
 Tribesmen: (entertaining of) 23  
 τριημιτεταρτημόριον: 106  
 τριηραρχία: 24, 186, 188  
 τρίγλη: (fish sacred to Hecate) 140  
*Tristram Shandy*: 117  
 τρόπος: (= 'character') vi  
 Trygaeus: 109, 211  
 Tymnes: 181  
 Tymphaic: (clay, used by fullers) 110  
 Tyrannion: (arranger of the manuscripts) 14  
 Tyre: 194  
 Tyrtamus: (real name of Theophrastus) 3  
 Usurer(s): 24, (Plutarch's attack on) 79, (views on) 79, 195  
 Valeria: (flattery of Sulla) 45  
 Variety performances: 25. See θαύματα  
 Varro: (*De Personis*) 29; 136  
 Verbs, rare: 21, 22  
 Vices: (so-called Theophrastan) 9  
 Virgil: 68, 137, 139, 140, 141, 146, 147, 151, 157  
 Virtues: (Theophrastan work on?) xi, 4

Greek, and it would therefore have been much more sensible to use Greek alphabetical order rather than roman. However, each letter of the alphabet has a head-letter or letters, the first being roman and the rest Greek, e.g. E. E. H. or P. Π. Φ. Ψ, and this at least makes it clearer which words one may expect to find where. Nevertheless the arrangement is still rather peculiar, resulting as it does in words beginning with *theta* following those with *tau*. As it happens, there is nothing under C except Greek words beginning with κ and χ.

### *Greek order with roman interfiled*

This class too is represented by ten items in the sample. Because the Greek alphabet is shorter, problems arise with roman letters which are not directly represented in Greek. The chief of these are C, F, V and W. Sometimes C is treated as *kappa*; sometimes it is filed in its roman place between *beta* and *gamma*; sometimes after *gamma*. English words beginning *ch* may appear at C or may be filed under *chi*; words beginning *th*, however, usually seem to be filed under *tau*. F almost always appears after *epsilon*; this is doubtless influenced by its former position (as *digamma*, representing the sound W) in the earlier Greek alphabet. On the other hand, I have found one example where it is treated as the equivalent of *phi* and filed there. W tends to be inserted after *upsilon*. The following examples are from Demosthenes, *Select private orations of Demosthenes*, ed. F. A. Paley and J. E. Sandys, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886), Part 1:

Βόσπορος [Bosporos]

Bottomry

βουλή, manager of finance [boulē]

Corn-laws

σημεῖα λιμένων [sēmeia limenos]

Shilleto, quoted

Σικελικὸς κατάπλους [sikelikos kataplous]

Sophists, held in contempt

It is interesting to note that Part 2 of this work, published in the same year, has a quite separate Greek index. This seems to indicate that the publishers had no particular policy about the matter.

A strange treatment of W is shown in Plato, *The Phaedo of Plato*, ed. Harold Williamson (London: Macmillan, 1904), with the following sequence:

σχολῆ ἄν [scholē an]

Swan, bird of Apollo

Swan's song

Either the w is being filed according to its *appearance*, in that it resembles *omega* (ω), or else inadequate thought has been given to the filing generally; probably

the latter. It should be mentioned in mitigation that the index is quite small and it is not difficult to scan the entries.

### *Semi-interfiled*

I have found only five of these. By this category I mean those indexes where each letter of the alphabet contains two sequences, one in Greek and one in roman, but no attempt is made to interfile them. None of these books is recent, and it seems unlikely that such a sequence would be compiled nowadays. The result is really the worst of both worlds, because the reader suffers all the possibilities of confusion already mentioned without the benefit of a unified single-sequence index. As in the previous two categories, it is possible to base the order on either the roman or the Greek alphabet. A very strange example of the former is Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, ed. Edward Wunder (London: D. Nutt, 1854). Although Greek predominates in the index, a roman order is used, and roman words precede Greek under each letter. *Omega* is treated as O, and *phi* as F (see Figure 3). Under T we find first the roman words starting with T, then Greek words with *theta* and finally words with *tau*. The heading U V includes the following sequence:

Verb, finite, omitted

Verba dicendi

Universal terms employed in allusion to a particular individual

ἕβρις [hubrin]

ἕβρις [hubris]

Note that *upsilon* is treated as U, not Y, and that the 'rough breathing' is ignored. The sole entry under W is

Woman annoyed by unfaithfulness on the part of her husband

An example of the Greek alphabet being the basis of the order is Euripides, *Hippolytus coronifer*, ed. J. H. Monk, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1821). Here the roman words are in Latin, which solves the problem of what to do with W as the Latin alphabet has no W. Under each letter the Greek words come first, followed by the Latin; *theta* and *tau* naturally come in their correct places. There are no roman words beginning with Th but we can assume that they would have come after *theta*. We find 'Comparativi duplices' at the end of the *kappa* sequence, 'Futura' at the end of *phi* and 'Chorus mulierum' at the end of *chi*.

### *Advantages of integrated indexes*

It remains to consider whether integrated indexes are as unsatisfactory as some maintain, or whether perhaps they may have some advantages. There is no doubt that from the production point of view, particu-

<i>ἔχω</i> with infinitive . . . . .	1223	<i>φαίνειν</i> τί τινι . . . . .	1144
<i>ἦ</i> . . . . .	973	<i>φανείς</i> . . . . .	430
<i>ἦ</i> adverb . . . . .	563	<i>φανείς</i> ἔστι . . . . .	1
<i>ἦ</i> <i>ἔχω</i> . . . . .	543	<i>φανερὸς ἐμφανῆ</i> . . . . .	599
<i>ἦ</i> <i>καὶ</i> — <i>νέμεις</i> ; . . . . .	395	<i>φανῶ δ' ἐγώ</i> — <i>ξυνήγορα</i> .	1144
<i>ἦ</i> <i>καὶ</i> <i>πυρᾶς πλήρωμα</i> <i>τῆς</i> <i>εἰρημένης</i> ; . . . . .	1193	<i>φάσκειν</i> and <i>λέγειν</i> with <i>ἀνθρώποις</i> <i>οἱ ἐν ἀνθρώ-</i> <i>ποις</i> . . . . .	420
<i>ἦ</i> <i>κάπῃ ταύτῃ</i> — <i>ἀνήριθμον</i> ; .	243	<i>φάσμα</i> . . . . .	502
<i>ἦ</i> <i>κάρτα</i> <i>κτλ.</i> — <i>'καλεῖτο</i> . . .	376	<i>φάτιν</i> . . . . .	684
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μὴν</i> <i>τί θράσειν, καὶ τόδ'</i> <i>ἔξειρήσεται</i> ; . . . . .	1166	<i>φήμης</i> <i>δμμα</i> . . . . .	200
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μισρά</i> . . . . .	973	<i>φημί</i> . . . . .	415
<i>ἦ</i> <i>που</i> . . . . .	837	<i>φθίνουσιν</i> . . . . .	538
<i>ἦ</i> <i>δ' οὐν</i> <i>ἔασθω</i> . . . . .	326	<i>φιλεῖν, τὸ, = τὴν φιλιαν</i> .	1223
<i>ἦ</i> <i>θε</i> . . . . .	973.	<i>φιλεῖν, τῷ</i> . . . . .	459
<i>ἦ</i> <i>θε</i> <i>τ' οὐδ' ἂν</i> <i>εἰ</i> <i>κάρτε</i> <i>ἐν-</i> <i>τακίῃ</i> . . . . .	459	<i>φλογιζόμενον</i> . . . . .	95
<i>ἦ</i> <i>θε</i> <i>τοὶ</i> <i>τύχη</i> <i>κτλ.</i> . . . . .	324	<i>φλοξ</i> <i>αἱματηρά</i> . . . . .	757
<i>ἦ</i> <i>δοναῖς</i> <i>ἄμοχθον</i> <i>ἐξαιρεί</i> <i>βίον</i> . . . . .	144	<i>ροβῶ</i> <i>ταρβεῖν</i> . . . . .	173
<i>ἦ</i> <i>κουσεν</i> <i>κτλ.</i> . . . . .	428	<i>ροιτάδα</i> . . . . .	966
<i>ἦ</i> <i>λώσε</i> . . . . .	255	<i>ρονία</i> <i>νεφέλα</i> . . . . .	822
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μαρ</i> . . . . .	644	<i>ρόνων, ἐκ</i> . . . . .	549
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μεῖς</i> <i>δὲ</i> <i>προσμένωμεν</i> ; . . .	387	<i>ρορᾶς</i> . . . . .	1192
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μέρα</i> . . . . .	644	<i>ροράζει</i> . . . . .	595
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μέρα</i> <i>ταυροσφάγος</i> . . . . .	899	<i>ροράζειν</i> <i>τινὶ</i> <i>θαύμα</i> <i>ἀνέλ-</i> <i>πιστον</i> . . . . .	663
<i>ἦ</i> <i>μος, φίλαι, καὶ</i> <i>οἶκον</i> <i>κτλ.</i>	522	<i>ρορεοῦν</i> . . . . .	52
<i>ἦ</i> <i>ν</i> . . . . .	512	<i>ρορονεῖν</i> and <i>ροστίον</i> opposed	1210
<i>ἦ</i> <i>νθηγεν</i> . . . . .	1068	<i>ρώνει</i> <i>δίχης</i> <i>ἐς</i> <i>δρόσον</i> . .	344
<i>ἦ</i> <i>νίκα</i> . . . . .	83	<i>ρώνην</i> <i>ἰέναι</i> . . . . .	319
<i>ἦ</i> <i>νυτον</i> . . . . .	316	<i>ρωνήσατε</i> . . . . .	199
<i>ἦ</i> <i>πάτα</i> . . . . .	701		
<i>ἦ</i> <i>πται</i> — <i>ἔρπει</i> . . . . .	996	<b>G</b>	
<i>ἦς</i> <i>ἔθνησχ'</i> <i>ὑπερ</i> . . . . .	699	Genitive . . . . .	559
<i>ἦ</i> <i>σει</i> . . . . .	319	— absolute . . . . .	110. 794
<i>ἦ</i> <i>τις</i> <i>πατρὸς</i> <i>νέν.</i> opposition <i>το</i> . . . . .	6	— after adverbs of place . . . .	893
<i>ἦ</i> <i>τις</i> <i>προσιμᾶ</i> — <i>πεφυκέναι</i>	712	— after verbs of telling and interrogating . . . . .	914. 1102
<b>F</b>		— after <i>ἀποσπάλλομαι</i> and <i>ψεύδομαι</i> . . . . .	703
Facts, immutability of . . . . .	733	— double . . . . .	563
Future indicative and aorist conjunctive joined . . . . .	959	— of place . . . . .	563
Future indicative with <i>δπως</i> , after imperative . . . . .	595	— of price . . . . .	285
<i>φαίνειν</i> . . . . .	1. 236	— unusual position . . . . .	737
		— with <i>ἀπό</i> , like Latin ab- lative of instrument . . . . .	657
		<i>γαίαν</i> . . . . .	1039

Figure 3. Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, ed Edward Wunder (London: D. Nutt, 1854), p. 225

larly with computerized filing and typesetting, a separate Greek index is easier to deal with, and in most cases it should be regarded as the normal practice. Moreover, as Wellisch points out, there is no saving of space in having an integrated index. Nevertheless there seem to me to be two situations in which it is better to make one.

First, when the number of entries in one alphabet is so small that to take them out would result in an absurdly small separate index. The difference between Greek and roman type is usually such that the 'intruders' in an integrated sequence stand out markedly and are easily spotted.

Second, when the entries in Greek are of a different nature from those which would go in a separate index. By this I mean that Greek indexes are usually indexes of Greek *words*, as words rather than subject concepts; sometimes, however, it is more appropriate in an index of concepts to use the original Greek than an English equivalent, and these words are then better placed in the general index than separated.

Moreover, many Greek scholars may be using the index to look for *names* and the like, which may have been indexed either in Greek or in their roman transliteration. Even bearing in mind some of the problems that have been mentioned, it will often be quicker to find such entries if they are in one sequence.

### *Which method to use?*

Granted that an integrated index will always be the exception, supposing that it is decided to produce one, which of the three methods should be used? The third method has already been dismissed as the worst of all worlds; it is essential to produce a single sequence. The decision as to which alphabet to use as the main filing order must be based on the preponderance of entries. If the amounts are roughly equal it should also be borne in mind that it is easier to file Greek words into the roman alphabet than roman into the Greek. I should therefore recommend that when a combined index is deemed necessary method I be adopted if possible. Rough breathings are better ignored, and eccentricities such as treating *phi* as F should be avoided; in short, the transliteration shown in Figure 1 should be adopted. None of the indexes I have examined has any introductory note explaining the filing order, but obviously if such a note were included most of the problems could be alleviated.

Finally, anyone who thinks that interfiled multi-alphabet indexes are no longer being compiled should look at *ABHB: the annual bibliography of the history of the printed book and libraries*.<sup>1</sup> Although there normally seem to be no Greek entries, the author indexes always contain roman and Cyrillic interfiled in one sequence. The following examples are taken from the 1989 volume:

Bryan, H.  
Брыкайло, Е.  
*Das Buch in Praxis und Wissenschaft*

Uray, P.  
Урпенский, Б.  
Vaags, P.  
Вацуро, В.  
Vakkari, P.  
Валк-Фалк, Э.  
Valkema Blouw, P.

### References

1. Wellisch, Hans H. *Indexing from A to Z*. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1991, 147-8.
2. Wheatley, Henry B. *How to make an index*. London: Elliot Stock, 1902.
3. Published annually: Dordrecht: London: Kluwer.

---

*J. H. Bowman is Lecturer in the School of Library & Information Studies, University College London.*

---

From Kenneth Hudson & Ann Nicholls, *The Directory of museums and living displays* (London: Macmillan 1985):

The preface to this rather gigantic, international-scale work explains why there is no subject index; apparently it would have been about 300 pages long and might have also been misleading since museums describe their collections in such different, and sometimes optimistic, ways. Such an index would have been, the authors argue,

largely window dressing, and window dressing on this scale is unreasonably expensive both for the customer and for the publisher. We came down against it and we have good reason to believe our decision will find general support. (p. viii)

For once in my life I think I may agree: the museums listed in the book are sorted by country, which immediately makes them more manageable for anyone who is not planning a whistle-stop tour of the whole of Europe or SE Asia. And it is quite true that some museums say they have 'arms and armour' which might mean a whole gallery full or might be just a battered shield, a helmet of dubious provenance and a couple of anonymous bent swords. But let us hope that the concept 'index = window dressing' does not spread into unwonted (and unwanted) places.

C.L.