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


'With an index that cites countries, historic events, pseudonyms, and real names, it's easy to locate a spy known only by a field name or location.'


'If you want to become educated in food science, food technology, or nutrition, here is your textbook. Its 304-p index, with a total of about 48,000 key words/terms, will lead you to any subject you wish to search. Frankly, I'm impressed. I could not find a concept or word that was not listed . . . .' (index by Jan Ross, SI member)


'This is a helpfully potted guide, with an introduction relieved by humour, some sharp notes in the chapter headings and a comprehensive index (compiled by Elizabeth Wallis).' (who is the SI Registrar; how refreshing for the indexer to be mentioned in a review!)


'That he has failed to understand women and their development should be weighed against a well written book, warmly presented with good case studies, a lengthy list of references, and an excellent index which makes it possible to "dip in" without committing yourself to the whole.' (so, is all forgiven?)


'Indexing is thorough and includes cross-references to complete entries for popular acronyms.'


'The thorough index, well suited to specific retrieval, complements the thematic arrangement . . .'
INDEXES REVIEWED


'The text is tireless, the index a marvel.' (index by Judy Batchelor, SI member)


'The arrangement is not botanical, so the index is an absolute necessity.'


'I've looked up "zebras," I was pleased to see that the index listed both duodenal and colonic varices. The term "hematobilia" was missing from the index, as it should have been, since I was unable to locate a discussion of bleeding from the hepatobiliary tree in the book.'


'It has been getting better and better for so many years that the only improvement they could think of this year (and a clever one) was to give telephone numbers as well as page references in the index. It's that good.' (index by Helen Litton, SI member)


'In every way [this volume] appears to be the opposite of user-friendly—until, that is, one reaches the indexes. There are four of these... [the] last is the work of Paul Brand, whose expertise lies behind the whole volume. His concluding index is the essential finding-aid for any intending reader.' (and reviewer continues at some length on its virtues, especially in throwing up new lines of scholarly research)


'The index in the back is excellent, referring to both general and specific subjects and authors cited in the text.'


'On Internet 94 is well indexed. The last forty pages comprise the subject index, which is probably where most readers will want to start.'


'The book's only shortcoming is its lack of references, but it makes up for that with an exhaustive and useful index. A valuable reference... in any discipline where there is a need for ready access to information about desktop computers.'


'There is an extensive index by artist's name and numerous cross references. This is an impressive piece of scholarship.'


'The book has a three-page glossary and a complete index of plant names... in popular and Latin nomenclature. A nice feature of the index is its inclusion of plant names found in captions, illustrations, maps, and tables.'


'But last things first: the book has one of the finest indexes you could wish to see:

Reeves, Keau

desire to appear in Evil Dead III, 244
eytymology of word "Keau", 239
role of hair in rise to stardom, 236
standing on corner, confused, 246
unbelievable articulateness, 244

Roberts, Julia

lack of resemblance to Eighth Avenue whores, 47
unwise decision to cut hair, 171

Rourke, Mickey

as challenge to God's existence, 53
chemotherapy-patient look of in Year of the Dragon, 38
ideal casting as retarded third-grader, 78
inability to speak Portuguese of, 78
jalapeno peppers and, 48


'Cross-references for compounds with multiple names are listed in the index but not in the text; nevertheless, the indexes are well done.' ('nevertheless'? a plus, surely)

The Indexer Vol. 19 No. 2 October 1994 135
INDEXES REVIEWED


'The 31-page index of titles and first lines is a feature which adds greatly to its value for libraries.'


'Decent indexing and table of contents make it possible to find the information you need despite the odd structure of the book.'


'With this type of textbook, the index is extremely important, and the index in this book is very thorough.'


'Its user-friendly index, appearing in each volume, makes it just as good a choice for the practicing dermatologist [as for any general physician] seeking recent information applicable to difficult cases.'


'The editors' style lends itself to reading a whole chapter at a time, rather than looking up the "recipe" for specific problems in "cookbook" fashion, although it is possible to answer a specific question (such as the current recommended antibiotic prophylaxis for a gunshot wound) relatively easily with the help of the index. The text-book like style will give this book enduring value.'


'Students will now have an excellent basis for any project they attempt whether it contains research on gem species or variety via the excellent index, or whether they need to investigate current activity through the List of Serial Publications.'


'The book comes with a good index, which, together with the maps and charts, makes it a friendly reference volume for anyone not interested in slogging through the annual *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.'

**Two Cheers!**


'Three indexes access material by title, author, and subject... An index by reading level would have been useful.'


'An index is provided, although it might have helped to include cited authors as the Harvard system is used and therefore there is no reverse link from the alphabetical list of references to the relevant position in the text. This is compensated for, to a degree, by the very useful subject index to articles on recent computer-based reference services.'


'Although government documents are relatively easy, if time-consuming, to identify and locate, this cumulative bibliography with its brief annotations, subject arrangement, and topical indexing will considerably help readers seeking material on topics relating to women. There are no title or corporate indexes so this way may not be the place to verify an incomplete citation quickly.'


'Three indexes round out this directory: an Application Index, based on the area of interest or subject field... a Company/Product Index listing titles by publisher... and a Company Index with basic corporate directory information (with fax and toll-free numbers in many cases).... There are some shortcomings to these indexes, but nothing to detract from the general usefulness of this directory. The Applications Index needs more cross references between categories... The Company/Product Index lists titles by the producer or publisher of the CD-ROM but not by the information provider, while all firms and organizations are included in the Company Index.'


'Skipping freely from chapter to chapter can pose a challenge owing to the widespread and necessary use of acronyms. Although the more frequent ones are defined in the index, some are peculiar to one chapter. Putting these definitions in bold type would lighten the reader's task.'


'An index which provides an alternative strategy to that found in the Table of Contents would make the information more readily accessible. The current index assumes the reader wants to access information by disease, rather than by place, for example.'

INDEXES REVIEWED


'The preparation of the index seems to have been hasty and capricious.'


'But what personal knowledge can Seymour-Smith have? We cannot know because this vast, prolix book has only a pitiful three-page bibliography, an index composed mostly of entries followed by a useless string of page numbers, and not one footnote. Not one single source is given for anything.'


'[Lockerbie] is an enormously complex story which leaps around continents and bureaucracies and dives deeply into legal arguments surrounding whatever responsibilities Pan-Am might hold for the disaster. There are inconsistencies and, in the American way, almost every page bristles with acronyms. The index is somewhat sloppy, so it would be easy to get lost.'


'The index is inadequate: "meadow", "common", "orchard", "coppicing", "assarting", "marshland", "reclamation", "drainage" are just a few of the key topics omitted which find mention in the text.'


'To give the reader a more usable guide to the vast work, for more index terms.' (how about turning to a professional indexer?)


'Slipshod organization and production also mar the book... The index is maddeningly incomplete and contains at last a few incorrect page numbers.' (Applause Book muted)


'My only criticism is a presentational one in relation to the index. The print style in this section differs from that in the rest of the book: it is small, rather cramped and difficult to read without eyestrain, thereby spoiling what is otherwise an excellent book.' (hap'orth of tar department?)


'In addition, a better index and more extensive use of cross-referencing in the text would have been useful to guide the reader to further relevant areas of the book dealing with other important aspects (and illustrations) of the particular condition under discussion.'


'The only fault to be found is with the highly inaccurate index—perhaps taken unchanged from an earlier edition.'


'Indexing has been a concern in all editions of this copious work. The brief descriptions of indexed terms have been dropped in this edition to allow a reduction in index pages together with a slight increase in index terms. Access to the contents of the articles is improved, but still inadequate for many purposes. For example, the index entry "Periodicals" now refers to the article on "indexing," but still not to the article on "Serials": NOTIS and OCLC are there, but not the innovative PICA system in "Netherlands"; Enoch Pratt Free Library is missing, although half the article on Joseph Wheeler discusses his work there. Entries that simply duplicate titles of encyclopedia entries might be cut, and replacing the six long lists of countries with a standard reference to those articles would free three to four pages for more index terms.'


'To use such a work a good index is indispensable. Here the choice of terms is satisfactory (if a little inconsistent), but a printer's glitch has led to the page references being one, two or three pages out for the second half of the book. Once this is realised the index is quite usable, but it is annoying and will confuse casual readers.'


'With a full contents page and an index, reference is also easy. However, there is difficulty where headings exaggerate or do not adequately define the subject and where the subject is mentioned on a scatter of pages without any indication as to the main reference.'


'Indexing is generally good although appended materials are treated inconsistently (or not at all) creating difficulty in accessing the valuable practical materials.'

indexes censured

Indexing has been a concern in all editions of this copious survey, which find mention in the text.'
the index needs to be redone on the model of the excellent index to Liddell Hart’s History of the Second World War—a book which A World at Arms exceeds in comprehensiveness.’


‘100,000 handwritten cards . . . This card file has now been revised, standardized, and published . . . arranged by subject, based on those headings established by the New York Public Library, supplemented by additional headings that the compilers thought useful . . . Though I found no “see also” references, there are a few cross-references that mainly cover different forms of names. This is unfortunate, though understandable, given the ad hoc nature of the index’s development. But this deficiency can make finding everything in the index on a particular topic difficult. “Afro-Americans — Relations with Jews”, for instance, has a number of articles index on a particular topic difficult. “Afro-Americans — Relations with Jews”, for instance, has a number of articles discussing the issues of affirmative action and quotas, with no reference to another heading “Affirmative Action Programs”.


‘There is a comprehensive index of inscriptions but no index locorum, and the Index proper is itself decidedly skimpy (e.g. no entry on either pater or puer). Given the broad compass of the work, a geographical index would have greatly added to its usefulness: many of the place names will be unfamiliar to K’s readers . . .’


‘. . . and an index with a peculiar and quite serious fault: the secondary listings are in chronological instead of alphabetical order, which is particularly annoying for a book itself ordered chronologically. For instance to find the NatWest Tower bombing you must look up “Provisional IRA British campaign” (or “London” to be referred to the latter) and then run hopefully through a list of 75 events, while the “Provisional IRA” entry subverts over 220 non-alphabetical entries, many not separately indexed.’


‘Species and sub-species are indexed with an indentation system that can be confusing (you can’t find Heron, only Herring and Iceland, until you realise you’re still in the middle of the Gulls list—bold type for species would have solved the problem—and incidentally the Night Heron that we thought we saw while terrier-walking isn’t listed), the references being to pages, which is sometimes a bit silly: is anybody going to get such an overpowering desire to see a Mallard that he’ll look up 82 different page references? As with so much indexing, a little thought about the user’s who and how would pay dividends.’


‘However, a problem here is that a number of data management features are referred to, e.g. “string searching” and “online thesaurus”, where the reader may need to recap on the meaning. Unfortunately, neither of these topics appears in the index, yet other, less essential subjects for the beginner, e.g. “Boyce-Codd normal form”, “Gannit charts” and “Work breakdown structures” are included. Apart from omissions, the index also exhibits the elementary fault of using a see reference when it is uneconomic and involves an extra, unnecessary step . . . See references should be avoided when there are very few page numbers and no subheadings and it would be more helpful, in these instances, to use direct entries:

CD-ROM 21, 68–9
Compact Disk Read Only Memory 21, 68–9


‘Something has gone badly wrong with the index. There are numerous proper names in the text to which there are no references. One is mentioned on at least five pages, but has only two page references. There are numerous references in the index to wrong pages.’


‘While always pleased to have a new edition of this excellent reference book, the index is its downfall. “It’s not made so that you find anything, is it?” said one of my colleagues trying to unravel the indexing system while an enquirer waited on the telephone. She was right. To look up a company, for example, TAB Microfilm Services of New Jersey, you look under T in the “Index of indexes” at the back. There is TAB followed by the abbreviation MSB. You then have to look at the beginning of the “Index to indexes” to find that MSB means Microfilm (source document) Service Bureau (fairly obvious admittedly). Then you have to turn to the contents page at the front and look for Microfilm Services Bureau. It’s not there but Source Document Service Bureau is. Turn to page 71. This is the start of the listings alphabetically by country although, being an American publication it, not unnaturally, starts with the USA. Entries are arranged alphabetically by state. Flick through until you find New Jersey. Companies are listed alphabetically and yes, there it is on page 96! By then, you have forgotten what you were looking for—oh yes, TAB Microfilm Services. Total time to look this up 1 minute 20 seconds. Why can’t TAB Microfilm Services in the main index simply have a reference of page 96 like normal indexes? Shame because there’s some good stuff in the source book—if you can find it!’


‘. . . and the index is only rudimentary.’


‘Typos are a couple of dozen too many, and the index is absurdly ungenerous. Theatres, places and subjects are not
indexes, nor, most regrettably, are Verdi's views. The reader must depend on luck to locate the composer's thoughts on such subjects as condolence letters ("a cruel custom"), singers ("Great Big Babies!!"), lawyers ("absolutely useless"), encores ("detest"). His three great remarks on Shakespeare go unindexed, as do his response to the death of Wagner, his initial reaction to Puccini and his view on who the real main character of Falstaff is.'


'A more serious problem is the complicated arrangement of entries... that is not always easy to follow. This, combined with the absence of cross references in the text or index, makes the work somewhat difficult to scan and hinders quick look-ups of known items. A reader looking for the Polish literary bibliography, perhaps best known as "Nowy Korbut" (Guide BD1304), for example, will not find it under that entry in the index even though the work is included in the bibliographic guide to bibliographies, encyclopedias, and handbooks.' ('Scholarly Resources?)


'The index of passages is comprehensive; the index of subjects, by contrast, is a little too terse and (seemingly) mechanically compiled to be as useful as it should be; who, for example, would know what to make of lists of page references for entries such as belong or directly? I would also have welcomed a more comprehensive listing of bibliographic references.'


'The book finishes with the poorest excuse for an index ever seen. One (of the few) advantages of publishing in book form, even in things that form serial publication, is that there is scope for providing a comprehensive (and/or author) index. In this case only the first 5 chapters (out of 11) have been indexed in any way; chemical formulae in the index remain incomplete; some expressions are placed in the index but without page numbers; and formatting commands have found their way in as well. Heads should roll in the proof-reading or production departments.'


'A few caveats need to be made. The most serious is that there is a woefully inadequate index. Men and women and places appear in the index as they appear in the text (e.g. Brainford for Brentford, Bishop Juxton for Juxon). This is irritating and inhibits search. Peers unconventionally appear under title alone and without cross-reference to family name. Men and women whose forenames do not appear in the text do not gain them in the index ("Warmestry, Dr", "Sidney, Lady"). More seriously, the index is especially weak for subject searches. I wanted to check which battles were mentioned—but there are no general entries under many of the obvious military headings. There is no index entry under "Ireland", but many scattered and interesting references in the anthology.' (indexing is not an odd job for the office boy)

## Indexes omitted


'Although her categorical index is well conceived, two of Steadman's other three indexes—name and play title—could have been usefully combined with her subject index, allowing her the latitude to include an author index, which is sorely needed.'


'Although there is an index by subject, there should also have been an index arranged by supplier, and an index by software would have been a useful addition.'


'Could the British Library Research Development Department consider providing an index to detailed reports? A few more pages would not do that much damage to the rain forests.'


'The book has a massive bibliography of forty-seven pages... of immense value... arranged in twenty-two sections... topical and biblical text arrangement will be appreciated by very many, but the search for the writings of particular authors is tedious and an author index would have helped.'


'... this work qualifies as a reference book. Therefore it is a shame that it has neither an index nor a detailed contents page... In my opinion this should be regarded as the standard work on the New Age from an evangelical perspective for some years to come. So, when it is reprinted, please may we have that index?'


'Editor and publisher deserve... praise, but they also deserve the blame for the book's major weakness; this book demands an index and did not get one.'

Geological Association of Canada: Facies models; response to sea level change, ed. R. G. Walker & N. P. James (3rd edn...
INDEXES REVIEWED


'a severe limitation to this book: there is no index... To omit an index in the first edition of *Facies Models* was excusable (though irritating) as the book was a sort of reprint collection. The same omission in the 2nd edition was frustrating for the users of the book, but to leave out any form of index or a comprehensive contents list in this new version is unforgivable.'


'Those who battle on to the end in hope of seeing the light will be dismayed when the book stalls abruptly without so much as an index, let alone a "thus we see...".'


'Without an index or detailed list of contents, the book's use as a reference source is limited.'


'Most irritating of all, there is no bloody index!' (representations in feeling)


'The absence of an index in a work of this complexity is a major drawback, and once again one feels that the researchers have been let down.'


'The utility and accessibility of this collection are seriously limited by several unfortunate editorial decisions, principal among which was the decision to publish without an introduction (the brief preface is totally inadequate), a subject index, or even a unified listing of where the material in each chapter first appeared.'


'It is unfortunate that the authors and publisher did not feel that an index was important, since there is so much sound information presented on each subject. An index would have made finding specific facts less difficult.'


'Yes, it does touch on women priests! Oh, for an index!'


'More unfortunately, the book is marked by the absence of an index, for which the useful glossary does not make up, and by some sloppy errors.'


'While there is a contents table, there is no index, and it is difficult to access specific information.' (but there are only five volumes to search)


'The most interesting feature of this book is the author's intellectual laziness (evinced, for one thing, by the lack of an index).'


'The work omits standard features expected in a professional publication. There is no index (in an NFAAS publication, no less!).'


'The only real criticism is the lack of an index, so if you want to look up specific facts you must know the day on which they happened.'


'...my only gripe is the lack of a subject index that would have allowed readers quick access to all the entries relating, say, to alehouses or domestic service. (off duty or on duty)


'The book ends with no index, but a "Glossary", in fact a rather arbitrary list of proper names (not all of which, as far as I can see, appear in the body of the book) and terms (*hubris, logos* etc); and a page of bibliography.'


'Its binding will stand up to frequent thumbing as ceramists leaf through it for parallels—unfortunately they will have to use it in this way, as there is no index.'


'It has no index.' (lost the addresses?)


'Addresses are arranged in nine chapters roughly by type, such as television and movie stars, sports figures, publishers, government agencies, and manufacturers... There is no index, so locating a particular address is not easy.' (lost even more addresses?)
INDEXES REVIEWED


'This is a truly wonderful book (although, alas, with one serious fault—that of the publisher's rather than the author's making)... the number of misprints throughout the book suggests a shoddiness of production that is eclipsed only by the lack of an index. It is as disgraceful as it is tragic that a book of this excellence and scholarship should have been deprived of the very tool that would ensure its maximum usefulness.' (the journal's editor adds: 'for any reader who, like our reviewer, feels disadvantaged by the lack of a proper index, we are happy to say that George has prepared one for his own use and he will gladly send a copy of it post free to anyone who asks for it in writing and sends £5 to George McHardy, 48 Crescent Lane, London SE4 9PU. Now there's an idea.)


'Unfortunately, the book lacks both an index and a table of contents, making it difficult to use for quick reference.' (for readers aged 8-12, who apparently won't want to look things up)


'Fine though it is to have Davie's "Collected Poems," it is a crime that Chicago has not provided the book with an index of titles and first lines. Has there ever before been a modern "Collected Poems" stinted of such things?'


'Twelve thousand toll-free domestic and international numbers are included... divided into 16 topical sections... There is no index.' (so lacks its own hotline directory)

Obiter dicta


'...including no less than three indexes. One of them contains, under "Paris", a list of 74 street names—which has to be a first for any kind of index.'


'To add to the sense of adventure, the reader may find that the illustration being sought is indexed incorrectly but nonetheless will have a pleasant time looking for it.'


'The most intriguing aspect of the gazetteer is a Quality Index given to every [Lake District] fell on the basis of a formula which computes the relative values of ascent, summit quality and view. Moving on from that, every fell is then given a Value-for-Effort score, which is the Quality Index divided by the amount of sweat involved in achieving it. No allowance, surprisingly, is made for what one might call the Pleasure-in-Effort Quotient, an omission which queues the pitch of the book.'


'At times... it is easier to pin down a particular source from the index than from the text: hearth taxes or lay subsidies, for example.' ('this issue's bright thought')


'Clarke's comprehensive index gives a vivid idea of her defects ("belligerence, cunning, shoplifting, superstition, unreliability, vindictiveness, mainlining, arrests and imprisonment") and some of her redeeming virtues ("generosity, graciousness, openness, straight speaking, pride in being black").'

* * *

'To call an index "outstanding" may sound like a contradiction in terms, for indexes are among those necessary but never spectacular products of hard—as well as skilled—work that can sometimes make the difference between a book and a good book. Their job is after all to be there when you need them and not to get in the way when you don't. But the Wheatley Medal committee's sole concern is indexes, and "outstanding" was the word they chose when highly commending the work of Julitta Clancy in the fourth edition of Benjamin's Sale of Goods (Sweet & Maxwell). Julitta is a founder member of the Irish regional branch of the Society of Indexers.' (accolade in Books Ireland, Feb 1994)

* * *

Our warm thanks to those who contributed to this section:

G. R. Allen (Bedford), Jane Angus (Crathie), Ken Bakewell (Liverpool), Caroline Barlow (Kempston), Judy Batchelor (Hanwell), Hazel Bell (Hatfield), J. H. Bowman (London), Joe Britton (Cambridge), Elizabeth Cook (Chester-le-Street), Maria Coughlin (Annapolis, Maryland), Trisha Feuerstein (Lower Lake, Calif.), Philip Found (Lincoln), John Gibson (Wichenford), Sue Goodman (Taunton), Jill Halliday (Lower Lake, Calif.), Berry Harper (Seaford), Joyce Harrington (Wichenford), Georgina Henry (Univ. of Mississippi), Ben Lipetz (Nassau, NY), Helen Litton (Irish Regional SI Branch), Anne McCarthy (Gullane), Maxine Merrington (Petersfield), Betty Moys (Seventoaks), Bob Palmer (Brooklyn, NY), Frank Pert (Windermere), Jan Ross (Whitegate), Jo Rudd (Harbord, NSW), Marilyn Sarmiento (London), Christine Shuttleworth (London), Claire Troughton (Birchington), Elizabeth Wallis (Kew), Bella Weinberg (New York), Liza WeinKove (Bramhall), Ric 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 issues—the earlier, the kindlier.