Before actually starting to index a book it must be scanned right through and its list of contents be studied in order to appreciate its general plan; then each chapter must be read attentively and judgment exercised in deciding, whilst the argument as a whole is fresh in one's mind, which are the words—neither too many nor too few—most serviceable to adopt as index headings. Skill in these preliminary stages of the work necessitates the indexer being generally familiar with the background to the subject of the book but, at the same time, circumspect enough to remember that the reader of the book and user of the index may be less familiar with the subject than he is himself. Such circumspection may be more difficult for the author of the book than for an independent indexer.

Finally Fig. 6 shows an adaptation of this system for the purpose of keeping a cumulative index to a periodical posted up to date immediately after each issue has appeared, so that no time need be lost in bringing out a new index covering the new and the preceding volumes as soon as each volume (or other run of the journal) is complete. The example reproduced here is part of the cumulative index to the mimeographed *Monthly Bulletin on Scientific Documentation and Terminology* which was started in 1952 and may at present be had free of charge by those constructively interested in its contents, from the Department of Natural Sciences in Unesco, 2 Place de Fontenoy, Paris 7e (but not through sales agents). A reference such as 54 0608 means item No. 8 in the issue of the 6th month of 1954. The index being mimeographed in two columns, the sheet here illustrated was made by cutting up that of the previous year into separate columns and pasting each column in the left-hand part of a sheet, hand-written current entries being thereafter interpolated month by month and the whole recopied on to new stencils at the end of the year. The sheets are shingled over one another in the same way as already described, but here the markings in the bottom right corner are simply copied from the entries at the foot of each column in last year’s index.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Dear Sir,

I have just been reading the article “Some Snags in Indexing” by G. Norman Knight which appeared in the last issue.

I note that Mr. Knight is very sensitive to the student’s need to “cast his eye over every reference to a given personage” in a really serious work, and he is right to feel that more adequate references are needed.

There is nothing more annoying than to refer to a page, expecting some important fact to emerge, and then to find that the person referred to is mentioned merely in passing.

However, Mr. Knight’s method appears to me to be too obsessional; if the reader cannot muster enough enthusiasm to scan a whole page when referred to he is not likely to use Mr. Knight’s index intelligently.
I believe that it would be far more useful in all indexed works (not solely in the case of a really serious work), to have an indication of the relative importance of each part of the text referred to. The fact that this can, and ought, only be done to a limited degree I realise, but I think that it might strike nearer to the ideals of clarity and utility.

To make clear the relative importance of references I suggest that variations of type be used for the page-numbers. The number of different kinds of type used should be limited. For instance, for the index of a fairly humble textbook, such as the Teach Yourself History of English Literature published by E.U.P., the number of different kinds of type could most usefully be limited to three.

The three I would choose would be:—
1. The type in which the rest of the book is chiefly set.
2. A heavier type of the same kind.
3. Italics, provided that the rest of the book is not chiefly in italics.

To demonstrate my suggestion I will take an example from the index to volume 3 of the history of English literature mentioned above:—


On reading through all the pages referred to here I find, as with the other references to personages in this book, that the substance of the text referred to can be broadly divided into three classes—

1. Material in which Addison is only mentioned in passing, or material of a relatively unimportant nature (such as references to something dealt with fully at a later stage in the text).
2. Material of importance dealing with his life and work.
3. Material mainly concerned with another person, but employing Addison's attitude, work or works as a comparison.

If we use the kinds of type suggested earlier to differentiate between these classes (using type 1 for class 1, type 2 for class 2, and type 3 for class 3), we have this result:—


With this system the reader is able to see at a glance which references are important and which are relatively unimportant without the compiler having to add more numbers to his index.

Yours sincerely,

KEITH BARNES.

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