Indexing in essence is a reading technique. The goal of this reading technique is the extraction of each subject and subject aspect utilized by an author or editor to interpret, explain, or prove something about the basic subject of his book, article, discourse, or paper. An index is a sustained, classified subject analysis of the content of a book, books in series, or of periodicals or pamphlets, wherein the subject entries and the sub-entries are set down in correct subject form, all entries being alphabetized in one alphabetic order by standard or recognized rules. To index is to read carefully and analytically for the subjects contained in a text, to extract and transfer to cards those subjects from the text in correct subject form both as to entries and sub-entries.

Nothing can be indexed without being read and analyzed. Indexing and reading rules go hand in hand but indexing goes further. Apply the advice and instruction for becoming a fine reader and indexing becomes one of "life's inexhaustible pleasures". Few are interested in reading per se but everyone who indexes must know about the reading process. Many accept the ability to read, and either read or do not read, but few general readers pause to think of what happens to them when they read; they are interested only in the end results—the news, facts, statistics—the subjects that have meaning in their lives. A fourth grade level can carry one through life with its billboards, signs, government forms, maps, traffic signals and road detours, printed directions and subway advertising; but such a level is not sufficient for an indexer nor is it sufficient to make life meaningful. Reading leads always to some goal. In the case of the indexer, the goal is the communication of knowledge.

Reading as one of the three R's has been unfashionable as a serious study. These past twenty-five years, to know the alphabet is "old hat"; to consult the dictionary when reading is not considered necessary. Children are taught to skip words they don't know—to skim, to avoid descriptive passages, to get the "sense". How can one read for "sense" when he does not know the meaning of words and is trained not to read all the words? Non-sense is the result of such a reading method. As emphasis has been directed away from the fundamentals of knowing the alphabet, correct spelling, and applying the rules of grammar and punctuation, the more fashionable subjects of Remedial Reading and Semantics have come into their own. If reading were taught simply, with care and exactness in the elementary schools, there would be less need for voluminous tomes on Remedial Reading, and the treatises on Semantics would be greatly appreciated.

"Spontaneous apprehension," to use Helen E. Haines' words in her Living with Books, is the goal no matter what type of reading one pursues. In indexing, this apprehension is the spontaneous recognition of each utilized subject as it appears in the text, coupled with the aspect taken in interpreting that subject. But this
spontaneous subject-apprehension does not come from skipping, sliding over words, skimming, swallowing, swimming, or floating through a text, but rather through careful, slow reading—word-for-word reading, sensing the importance of the punctuation, the relationship of words in their grammatical structure, and understanding the exact meaning of each word. This careful way of reading, when practised over periods of time, produces powers of analytic concentration and the result is not just rapid reading, but very rapid, accurate reading.

The reading technique depends on experience: experience in life and experience in reading. Reading experience may broaden our life by giving us an acquaintance with what is beyond the scope of our daily lives and, of a certainty, the more we read the more we acquire accuracy and rapidity. The creative urge is the spark in an author that causes the conflagration which we call a book. If the subjects therein contained do not make us respond as we read, we may say that the author has somewhat fallen short of the mark.

The indexer's reading requires an identification with the author's thinking, but emotional identification alone with a text is dangerous, particularly when one is indexing a text in which he has deep-rooted emotional interest or dis-interest. It would be unwise to request a Republican to index a text with a decided Communist or Marxian slant. Macaulay, a Whig, may well have said, as his publisher reported: "Let no damned Tory index my history".

You know how to read in one manner or another, but do you grasp the full significance of what an author has written? An indexer must make an immediate subject diagnosis and know exactly what subject and subject aspect is being interpreted by the text. Not what you think he thinks, but actually what the author thinks. Test yourself and your reading by taking some short work such as the Book of Ruth.

1. Examine the title and the first paragraphs, where you will perceive letters forming words, words in relationship to one another, and sentences formed of words, and word relationships. Words are formed from letters. You know the alphabet, so we'll skip the recognition of each letter. But what do you know about the ABC's?

2. Read a sentence, and another, and another. Examine the words—they are nouns, pronouns, adjectives, articles. Can you give each word its correct label? Continue through the text assigning to each word its label.

Students today do not know the parts of speech nor do they see much sense in knowing about them, but when they begin to understand this classification for words and can tell what an adverb is and what an adjective is, and how they differ from nouns and verbs, they become word-conscious. In subject analysis the recognition of an adherent noun (Diesel engine or income tax) is of prime importance and students delight in their ability to spot them.

3. Return to these same sentences and examine the punctuation. Do you really know what a colon, a period, a comma were intended to express in writing? Give the reason for each punctuation mark. In Ruth what does it add to the writing?
Would the punctuation be different if a new edition were prepared today? Clarify your thinking on the purpose of each punctuation mark. Students know the basic punctuation marks but rarely understand the function of the colon, the semi-colon, the comma. Indexers seem rarely to understand them. Note the misuse of the comma and the confusion in meaning that results:

Behaviour, activation, 72
compulsive, 78

Compulsive behaviour activation is not an aspect discussed by the author as it relates to behaviour activation. By heaven and by accuracy let the colon be used and have it read:

Behaviour: activation, 72
compulsive, 78
obsessive, 74
overt, 97

There is considerable difference between "overt behaviour activation" and a general discussion on "overt behaviour". Another example of punctuation misuse—in a lighter vein:

Peppermint Bombe, 691
icing, 7-minute, 692

This reads as seven-minute Peppermint Bombe icing, but it isn't. A colon after Peppermint would make it clear and exactly what it is, namely, seven-minute Peppermint icing.

4. Read each sentence aloud. Label each sentence—Is it a simple sentence, a complex, or compound sentence?

Graduate and undergraduate students have difficulty with this step. Beginning readers in indexing, abstracting, and concordance-making must know the definitions of these sentence types and be able to spot them. Undergraduates, who have never heard of diagramming sentence structure, are fascinated by it. Their reading accuracy improves and one student said that only through diagramming had he learned to visualize what subject analysis meant. Try diagramming each sentence in the Book of Ruth.

5. Word meanings. Students reading the Book of Ruth for the first time rarely grasp its significance because of their lack of acquaintance with certain words. The true significance cannot be found unless every unfamiliar word is looked up. Only after finding who the Moabites and the Ephrathites were, and how far Moab was from Bethlehem-Judea, and about how much barley Ruth was able to carry, does the whole story in toto become real. A good text on semantics helps many students.

6. Subject analysis can be undertaken by your posing to the text the interrogatives: who, what, when, where, why. Subject entries are the answers in subject-
form to those interrogatives. In class we take sheets of paper and rule the words, then make the analysis. This basic, simple way produces good indexes and abstracts in any subject.

Reading aloud is a great aid. Read aloud an article from, for example, the Reader's Digest. When you have finished determine the exact subject, then turn the interrogatives, who, what, when, where, why, on to the article. Try this aloud and then write down the subjects you've extracted. Then go back to the article and underscore with a bright pencil each subject mentioned. This is a fine memory test and an excursion in concentration. How well did your list of subjects done from memory compare with your underscoring of the actual text? Subject analysis is recognition of the trees from the woods.

Note, in reading, the paragraph-use; sustained writing always appears in paragraphs. Each paragraph is a distinct section or sub-division representing a new idea, or a new aspect of the subject under discussion in the discourse you are reading. For practice and as a check on yourself, note in the margin of the article you are reading the subject or subject aspect. Remember, too, that there are unit paragraphs in which the idea discussed is concluded and that there are extended or fluid paragraphs where the length of the discussion demands for readability that the paragraph indenture break up the concentration of printing. In the case of extended paragraphing, one subject may cover several paragraphs.

If you will refresh your thinking by reading a good discussion on paragraphing in a handbook of composition, subject-detection technique will become easier. Subjects are not always expression in words, and must be determined from the context. As an example, the basic subject of the Book of Ruth is never mentioned in the text. Great skill in reading and reading interpretation is required when subjects are only skirted and not stated specifically. Ruth is one of the world's greatest history stories, but how few readers can determine the exact subject that the author is interpreting.

The essence of indexing is simplicity, but simplicity, like chic-ness, is rarely found. Most people read emotionally, but few read analytically. Accurate, objective reading is required in an indexer or abstractor. His spontaneous reactions to subjects is simply spotting the trees from the foliage. This spontaneous apprehension is an indication of the difference between a general reader or a literary reader and a professional analytic reader. Re-learning to read is at the core of a course in indexing and abstracting. The clerical skills that accompany indexing can be acquired easily. Much of this method is elementary, but unless one is willing to re-examine his own reading methods and processes in this simple elementary way he will never become a reader who grasps the full meaning, and that is what is required of an indexer or abstractor.