indexing aids: thesauri


Unlike medicine, biology or engineering, archaeology cannot be sensibly treated through a worldwide optic. Each country has its own types of monument and artefacts, its own vocabulary and approaches.

...
and LIGHTBULB, and a third to make appropriate revision of the
thesaurus section on ELECTRICAL FITTINGS.)

Cherry Lavell, formerly Council for British Archaeology

references

archaeological and architectural records. Swindon: RCHME.

indexing aids: dictionaries and related
sources

Names of persons: national usages for entry in catalogues. 4th
revised and enlarged edition. Munich; New Providence;
publications — new series, vol 16) 24cm.
ISBN 3-598-11342-0 (cased): Db178

'I don't care what you say about me, as long as you say
something about me, and as long as you spell my name right.'
(George M Cohan, US songwriter and entertainer, 1878—1942,
in Chambers dictionary of modern quotations (1993) edited by
Nigel Rees.)

Indexers must not only be able to spell personal names, but
must place them correctly in the alphabetical sequence. We
frequently have problems with names and, unfortunately, cannot
rely on the text being indexed to indicate the entry element.
Faced with given names, family names, surnames (single, double
and prefixed), patronymics, names with epithets, and the rest, we
need reliable reference sources constantly at hand to guide us.

This book is one such guide.

The international indexing standard, ISO 999: 1996,
recommends that personal names should, generally, be given in
as full a form as possible, but that in an index to a single
document (a ‘back-of-the-book’ index), they should take the
form used in the document. It gives some useful examples. More
information can be found in Mulvany’s Indexing books (1994),
Wellisch’s Indexing from A to Z (1995) and Anglo-American
cataloguing rules (AACR2, 1988). All these publications,
however, cite Names of persons (the previous edition) as an
authority.

The new edition has over 260 pages packed with names and
information about names, showing how to present them and what
the entry elements are, and explaining the practice of the
country in question. Here are just a few examples of index headings taken
from its pages:

Ráuzsová-Martáková, Mária (Slovakia)
Ekaegbu-Ohadome, Ismael Chukukere (Nigeria — Eastern
Areas)
Bouthier de La Tour, Claire (France)
Tur-Sinaì, Naphati Herz (Israel)
Jóhannes ðr Kótlum (Iceland)
Strauss und Torney, Lulu von (Germany)
Rajo Endah, Syamsuddin Sutan (Indonesia)
Natt och Dag, Anna-Stina (Sweden)
Srinivasa Shastri, V.S. (India)
Bose, Subhash Chandra (India)
Surjit Kaur Sarna (India)
Bonham Carter, Mark (United Kingdom)
Nie an t-Saori, Máirtí (United Kingdom)

Iolo ap Gwynn (United Kingdom)
Thomdike, Dame Sybil (United Kingdom)
Mhic Néill, Máire (Ireland)
O Conchobhair Donn, Seán (Ireland)
Buffalo Child Long Lance (Canada)
Gros-Louis, Max Oné-Onti (Canada)
Nzima, Sarah Khithikane (South Africa)
Gey van Pittius, E. (South Africa)
Van Rensburg, M.C. Jansen (South Africa)

It is important to note the country of origin when dealing with a
name; the entry element for the same prefixed name, for
example, may differ between two countries. Index users cannot
usually be expected to know the native practices regarding name
entry and structure, so see cross-references are needed from the
various parts of compound names to the used form.

The text is arranged alphabetically by country name (in
English), from Albania to Zambia. There are 104 countries in the
sequence, plus a section on Arabic names. Omissions include,
remarkably, China.

The information given for each country is presented in a
standard layout. The name of the country is given in its official
language or languages, with the original script and romanized
versions where relevant. The language(s) spoken in the country
are listed. A brief note about the origin and development of
names may follow, then the name elements are explained, with
their required order in headings.

The plentiful examples given are illustrative, not prescriptive
— ‘the choice of entry is the nationally preferred one, but capital-
ization, and the use of commas and parentheses ..., will usually
be left to the discretion of users’. Where there has been a change
of practice, this is indicated. So under ‘Arabic names’ we have
first ‘Arabic usage to about 1800’, then ‘Modern Arabic usage
from about 1800’. Details of the national cataloguing code are
given, plus (if relevant) romanization schemes in use, national
authority files of names, then sources and recommended
references.

For several countries there is guidance on more than one
language. The UK entry includes English, Gaelic and Welsh
(medieval and modern) usage. For countries that are mainly
English-speaking the entry starts with the direction 'For name
usage in English see the entry under United Kingdom', then goes
on to explain other name usages for the country. So, for
Australia, the structure and practice of Aboriginal names is
explained, and for New Zealand, Maori usage. The guidance for
Canada refers to the UK and to France, and then explains the
practice for native names.

The entry for the USA refers to the UK entry for name usage
in English and then continues with additional information
concerning the origin and presentation of various types of name,
including forenames which were originally surnames (Holmes,
Oliver Wendell), married women’s maiden names used between
the forename and the husband’s surname and not regarded as part
of a compound name (Stowe, Harriet Beecher), surnames with
prefixes ‘usually of foreign origin’ (Van Doren, Mark). There is
no specific mention of native American names.

The examples of transliterated and romanized names (for
example Russian names originally in the Cyrillic alphabet) are
in the German form — Vajner, Arkadij Alexandrovich*, rather
than the English form — Vainer, Arkadii (or Arkadij)
Alexandrovich. It is up to individual indexers to follow the
transliteration used in the texts they are indexing and to provide
any necessary see cross-references from other forms.

The introduction records that all the countries listed in the earlier edition (1977, with supplement 1980), plus 53 countries that were not previously included, were invited to supply information for this edition. Few of the 53 responded, so some geographic areas are still not well represented. This may explain the lack of an entry for China, although there is some relevant information to be found under Hong Kong. Some of the former Soviet republics are not included because it was not possible to contact an appropriate authority. Despite these omissions, this is a valuable and authoritative compendium. All entries have been checked and approved by a named responsible person in a suitable corporate body within the country concerned.

There are many interesting things to be discovered here. Names in Iceland do not always include a surname and so may consist of forename(s) and patronymic, forename(s) and patronymic and family name, forename(s) and family name, or forename(s) and preposition and place name, appearing in headings, as:

Svava Jakobsdóttir
Gudmundur Gíslason Hagalin
Halldór Laxness
Jóhannes ur Költum

Korean surnames have only been widely adopted since the late nineteenth century and there are many different ways to romanize them — Yi, Lee, Li, Ree, Ri, Rhee, and Rihe are all possible presentations of the same name. In Turkey families have adopted official surnames since 1934, and in the same year titles of nobility were abolished. The Gambia has five languages in use. For name usage in English, UK practice is recommended; for national names, the Gambian Curriculum Development Council is reported to be drawing up standards for spelling and pronunciation.

The book is published as part of the IFLA Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC Programme. For the busy indexer who frequently has to tussle with personal name headings it is a valuable reference tool — and there is plenty of space for annotations to be added from one’s own working experience. Apart from its value as a source of guidance, it is also a very interesting read in its own right.

I should have liked the names of the countries to be printed in large, bold type on the outer corners of pages, to emphasize the identity of the sections and make them easier to find (there is, of course, a contents list).

Pat F Booth, information/training consultant

references


[*Alexsandrovic in German transliteration should end with a hacute character, not available with this Anglo-American typesetting character set —Ed]
indexing aids: encyclopedias


It is an indication both of the speed of change in our pre-millennium world and of the success of what has established itself as an outstanding work of reference that David Crystal's one-volume Encyclopedia has undergone two substantial revisions since it first appeared in 1990. Its major features and virtues have already been extolled in these pages (1st edition reviewed by Ann Hudson, in 17(3) April 1991, 227; 2nd edition by Philip Bradley in 19(3) April 1995, 233) and need not be rehearsed here. Thanks to our electronic age, corrections, additions and updating have all been attended to, adding (the editor tells us) some 20,000 extra words and dealing with such topics as BSE, Chechnya and the European Monetary Institute.

Faced with such a monumental and useful source of information the reviewer can do little except snipe at details. Many, but not all, recent political changes have been carefully noted; e.g. the effect of the 1997 UK general election on John Major and Tony Blair (but not Michael Heseltine or Gordon Brown) and on the Labour Party (but not the Conservative Party). Avon and Humberside are correctly noted as 'former counties', though pre-1972 county boundaries (e.g. between Oxfordshire and Berkshire) seem to have passed into a limbo reserved for irrelevant information and lost causes. The death of Princess Diana (who is correctly entered under 'Spencer') occurred too late to be recorded here: a reminder of the impossibility of keeping printed sources up to date. Less forgivably, the Public Record Office has been left struggling in its Chancery Lane premises, in contrast to the British Library, which ‘began its move to a new site’, we are told, ‘in 1992’.

The entry on ‘indexing’ is as succinct and judicious as the standing of the editor would lead us to expect. Turning to the only other area in which I can claim hands-on knowledge, I am cross that John Wesley’s brother Charles, despite his pre-eminence among hymn writers, gets no more than a glancing reference in connection with the ‘Holy Club’ at Oxford; and it is curious that, while his musically talented son Samuel merits an entry, his grandson, the much greater Samuel Sebastian Wesley, does not.

But these are specks on the face of the sun, and the Encyclopedia remains a must for anyone wanting quick access to a wide variety of topics, and not least to scientifically illiterate indexers (like myself) needing clear but authoritative explanations of scientific and technical matters.

John A Vickers, freelance indexer

indexes


Devotees of Parson Woodforde who belong to the Society dedicated to his memory will welcome this guide to the contents of its Journal. The work of a dedicated enthusiast, it will make it much easier for them to explore its back issues and find items of information they are looking for. That said, it has to be added that it is also the work of an amateur to whom it has not occurred that there might be techniques and skills involved in the creation of an index, so that the end result is by no means as useful as such a labour of love deserves to be. Chesterton’s dictum that if a thing is worth doing it is worth doing badly doesn’t apply to indexing!

Separate indexes to ‘names’, ‘places’, ‘subjects’ and ‘authors’ leads to considerable avoidable duplication. The index of authors (i.e. contributors) gives neither the titles nor the subjects of their articles, so serves no purpose beyond boosting the egos of the more prolific. Similarly, an index to books reviewed lists titles without the authors’ names and does so not alphabetically but in order of volume and page number. The so-called ‘subject index’ appears to be based on the wording of titles and does not look beyond to the text of the articles themselves. So ‘could do better’ has to be the verdict. And the moral? Indexing societies, in their concern for the professional, must not lose sight of their original goal of raising indexing standards generally, whether among professionals or amateurs.

John A Vickers, freelance indexer

publishing and writing


This guide consists of over 80 entries, ranging from the first on Arts Councils to the last on The Writers’ Guild. Each brief entry provides addresses, contact points, phone and fax numbers and a description of activities, including awards and funding. There are entries on little publicized organizations such as the Association of Little Presses, Mail Order Protection Scheme and the Marcan Handbook of Arts Organisations. There are useful descriptions of such terms as Bar Codes, Copyright, Intellectual Property, Libel, Proof Corrections and Specialist Outlets for Specialist Books.

Yes, indexing is here too, with advice to anyone commissioning an index to contact the Registrar.

Elizabeth Wallis, Registrar, Society of Indexers


As its subtitle indicates, Sequels lists series: in this instance, books that show development of character or plot, share characters or location, or books conceived as a series. Non-fiction is excluded, so that not only are the more obvious biographical/autobiographical sets not to be found, but also works such as James Herriot’s tales of veterinary practice. Listing is alphabetical under author with a descriptive
introduction plus a very brief annotation under each title, together providing a useful amount of information. American and British authors appear equally well represented.

There are two indexes, a straightforward title index and a subject index. The latter includes names of characters and also subject categories and geographical locations.

Subject categories are wide ranging, including topics such as time travel, horse-riding and Church of England. More difficult to handle are the very large genre categories. Historical novels are subdivided quite satisfactorily by country with cross-references to family sagas. However, under detective we find only detective, railroad and detective couple, with nothing to guide the enquirer to academic detective, amateur detective, police detective and private investigator. Some cross-references would have been useful.

A real attempt at completeness has been made, with many duplicate entries, but there are inconsistencies. For example, all the subentries under police detective, rural English also appear under police detective, English with the exception of Wycliffe who is missed out.

The geographical headings are the least successful aspect of this index. Those referring to the United States would appear (at least to the outsider) to present little problem as they all refer to much more specific place names. Many others, however, are unsatisfactory. For example, under Africa (see also Egypt) there are no subheadings for books by Karen McQuillan. These appear under Kenya. Conversely, books by Wilbur Smith are given here but not under South Africa, despite one series having an annotation describing it as giving a ‘microcosm of recent white South African history’. Inconsistencies occur again in duplicating subentries: William McIlvanney’s Jack Laidlaw appears under both Glasgow and Scotland but J M Barrie’s ‘novels of Scottish life and manners’ are listed only under Thrums.

Subheadings in subject and geographical main entries are almost exclusively names of characters. Reference to authors would seem to have been more helpful. For example, under Africa we have subheadings for Courtneys and Ballantynes rather than Wilbur Smith; under Scotland, David Balfour rather than Robert Louis Stevenson. In many cases the authors’ names are more widely known and the characters are not ‘lost’ as each has his own individual entry.

Although series titles sometimes appear as subheadings, there is no direct way of seeking these. The Raj quartet and Once and future king are notable examples not having their own entry. These would have been a very useful inclusion.

Titles such as this are primarily of use to librarians, to whom they are a godsend, and this is no exception. Comparison with its British equivalent (Gardner’s sequels) is interesting. Both cover much the same ground but each has material not included in the other. An international collaboration might be good!

Anne McCarthy, freelance indexer