INDEXES REVIEWED

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


'The table of contents is detailed and eminently useful and the index thorough. One would have a hard time finding a better reference guide to an individual subject.'


'The secret to this book's success is that it is so well-organized. The table of contents is organized by topic with questions in a How do I...? format listed below. The index is long and detailed, but easy to use. Many items are cross-referenced in several locations within the table of contents is organized by topic with questions in a How do I...? format listed below. The index is long and detailed, but easy to use. Many items are cross-referenced in several locations within the index. This allows readers to find answers fast....'


'And this coda is quite substantial, including a very informative glossary, a bibliography, and — fanfare here on behalf of all confirmed indexophiles — a well-constructed index. After two months of reading and re-reading this book, I cannot think of a single entry that the indexer hasn’t anticipated. High praise indeed! [The praise is due to ASI member Karen Lane, who also compiled the very informative glossary’. This was her first published index.]


'This work is a concise guide on how to plan, implement, operate, and support twenty-four-hour Internet access to images, audio, and video using a high-speed network.... The index is excellent.'


'All in all, this is a large scholarly book, clearly set out, meticulously researched and well indexed.'


'The index to this publication is excellent. It is a pity that the indexer is not given any credit.' [Index by the editor.]


'I am moved to comment on the superior typographical quality of this book. The indexing is also worthy of praise. Although the subject index occupies fewer than five pages, it covers a comprehensive list of terms and demonstrates the large range of subjects covered by this volume. The author index contains references to all the authors of literature cited in the body of the book.'


'It includes useful figures, tables and index and extensive lists of references and bibliographies.'


'And it has a useful index.'


'... a timely and valuable source book with a very comprehensive index... '


'Two splendid indexes help you to plot paths through the jungles of words and pictures.' ['Splendid indexes’ compiled by SI member Meg Davies and shortlisted for the Wheatley Medal.]


'The text is attractive to read, is supported by full and contemporary references and a comprehensive index and is generously illustrated and tabulated.'

'The index is extensive and helpful and the book is an accessible source for reference.'


'The recipes are laid out as menus rather than categorised by ingredient; thus the exhaustive index is much in use.'


'A thorough index and appendix of diagnoses (listing all cases that carry a diagnosis) allows quick reference to particular problems.'


'This is an interesting and well-researched book with plenty of photographs and, such a rarity these days, an excellent index. No lover of English country life will fail to enjoy it.'


'The index [by SI member Susanne Atkin] is very thorough and usable; this is a boon, as otherwise the book could be a little difficult to use — the compiler herself admits in the Introduction that browsing can sometimes prove more fruitful than using classification structures.'


'The work includes an extensive bibliography and index as well as a useful 6,000-word filmography.'


'A decent index, sixty-six pages of notes — but, alas, no bibliography at all — and four appendices attend Richard Abane's *End-Time Visions*.'


'The articles are signed, there are cross-references, and the indexing is careful, with pagination of major treatments given in bold.'


'A detailed table of contents, cross-references in the text, section introductions, and an extensive subject index as well as an author index help the researcher to navigate through the vast amount of material assembled and to select entries of greatest interest.'


'There is also an excellent index and a comprehensive bibliography for those who wish to examine the subject in greater depth.'


'Three indexes additionally enhance the usefulness of *Women in context*. The first, the Author Index arranged in twenty-year periods from 1701-1720 through 1901-1920, lists alphabetically the authors born within these years, their birth and death dates, their occupation or other terms of identification, social class, and the number referring to their entry in the text. Such an arrangement allows a reader to explore readily women's writings within a specific time frame for comparative study. ... The second index, the Identification Index, lists alphabetically the various categories by which an author might be identified — her occupation, her social class, her religious or political alliances — with the surnames of the authors listed alphabetically.... The third index, the Subject Index, reflects the important topics discussed by the author, ... with entries referred to by their numerical listing in the text. ... Proper names are also included in this index, enabling the reader to search out accounts of an author's references to significant literary figures... Where useful the index provides cross references.' 

[But see a dissenting view under 'Two cheers'.]


'Its excellent index will make it a frequently used book at the reference desk, in teaching user education classes, or for enhancing your own Web site as a subject specialist.'


'Notes, references and the general index are copious....'


'The lack of inventory numbers makes references difficult to follow, since the houses are arranged in order of address, though many are known by their names (a running heading could easily have been used, but at least there is a detailed index).'[Index by Ann Hudson, SI member.]


'... index is outstanding, and Silvey deserves much credit.'


'Well organized, illustrated, and thoroughly referenced, Dr Shepard's recent work is as complete as one could possibly hope. References and indexes alone account for more than 100 pages of material.'


'Finally, the Index of Names and the Micro-organism Index are very useful.'

‘All in all, a useful, thoughtful book, well-produced and with a good, appropriate list of references and a helpful index.’


‘The content is well-illustrated with a thorough general index and extensive references.’


‘There is an appendix of facts and figures and a good index.’


‘... there is a short but handy index.’


‘One of the best features of How to cook everything is its extremely user-friendly index, which occupies 53 pages. The recipe for apple-raisin bread pudding is indexed under “apple-raisin bread pudding,” “breading, apple-raisin,” and “pudding, bread, apple-raisin.” If How to cook everything seemed like a great cookbook gift before I saw the index, that pushed me over the edge.’ [Index by ASI member Maro Riofrancos.]


‘Possessing an extensive list of references and an excellent index, this book is an important study regarding international standardization.’


‘A glossary of terms is provided, and an index provides references for discussion of each of the 26 cases throughout the text.’


‘The full and informative bibliography, glossary, list of suppliers and index are reasons in themselves for buying this extraordinary book.’


‘Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez offer an introduction... and useful indexes.’


‘This book, aiming to investigate why the roles of women in rock are generally either "consuming, decorative or supportive", is broad, thorough, packed with useful tables, has a fine index and is utterly humourless.’


‘The articles are arranged alphabetically with extensive cross-references, and there is an extremely detailed index.’ [But see also the review by Robert Gottlieb under “Indexes censured”.


‘The entries, listed alphabetically by show title, each contain a treasure trove of information... An extensive bibliography and index enhance the book’s appeal.’


‘... the index amounts to a gazetteer of the popular songs of the period, or those which the compiler [...] considers to be worth preserving — some 18,000 in all.’


‘The index is full with cross- and see-also references.’


‘It is thoughtfully laid out, with... an extensively detailed index that takes up the whole of volume ten. Users of the CD-Rom version have the added advantage of being able to use the index to take them straight to the relevant entries... There are entries on a posteriori, a priori, analyticity, communicative rationality, implicature and incommensurability, but not on Dasein, language-game, noesis, and hyle. These latter, however, are all in the excellent index, which sends you to the entries on, respectively, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Husserl.’ [Index by SI members Indexing Specialists.]


‘Impeccably edited, indexed and cross-referenced, it is also a very handsome physical object...’


‘There is an impressive 47-page, double-columned index.’


‘There is an adequate index and a few attractive illustrations.’

'The location of the main sections remains the same as in the previous edition, a decision that will be appreciated by readers who have memorized section numbers. Those who must search for a section will no longer find a multilevel table of contents in the beginning of the manual. Instead, they will need to refer to the detailed table of contents at the beginning of each chapter or use the more than adequate index.'


'All eight fascicules of this great project have rightly been praised in earlier volumes of *JBAAS*. The Index volume follows the same list of categories as the excellent index to Volume I; compiled by Roger Goodburn and Helen Waugh, and published in 1983. The two will have to be used together and it is, perhaps, a pity that in these days of powerful computers they could not have been combined and consolidated. That, however, is a very minor cavil in what was a comprehensive index refers to titles, authors and illustrators and allow one to find all references to myths of a particular origin.'


'Collections are listed in alphabetical order with an indication of dates and scope of coverage, size of the holdings, and availability of finding aids. A detailed subject index provides additional access to the contents.'


'Each citation includes author, date of publication, title, name of book or journal, book publisher, and an annotation. The annotation generally consists of relevant keywords, the genera appearing in the article, and, if the contents are not made clear by the title, a short description. The order is alphabetical by author. An English name index and a genus with keyword index provide access by subject.'


'The comprehensive index refers to titles, authors and illustrators as diverse as Caldecott, Aesop and Blyton.'


'What has happened to copy-editing? Proof-reading also shows signs of haste, but full marks for the index.'


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'Each citation includes author, date of publication, title, name of book or journal, book publisher, and an annotation. The annotation generally consists of relevant keywords, the genera appearing in the article, and, if the contents are not made clear by the title, a short description. The order is alphabetical by author. An English name index and a genus with keyword index provide access by subject.'


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'What has happened to copy-editing? Proof-reading also shows signs of haste, but full marks for the index.'


'A comprehensive, precise, and easy to handle "analytical index" closes the book.'


'This is not a book for the casual reader, nor even your casual history buff, who might well find its detail overwhelming. This is rather a scholar's compilation, so organized — with its full index and bibliography, lengthy chronology of events and topical arrangement of chapters and sections — as to facilitate ready reference, the whole attractively printed with an absolute minimum of gaffes, all as befits the leading British authority on the subject and her distinguished publisher.'

Two cheers!


'Each chapter is accompanied by a set of references. The index of authors provides a guide to these references and, helpfully, uses bold type to indicate the page number on which the full citation can be found. It is surprising that a note explaining this feature was not included at the beginning of the index. A subject index concludes the volume and, while one is pleased that it has been provided, 110 headings is really insufficient to provide an adequate guide to over 300 pages of text. The plan seems to have been to index the main occurrences of topics, and the deficiency becomes apparent when seeking to assemble information about the design systems discussed. The project called FABEL, for example, is covered in Chapter 12, pages 301-332, but the subject index lists only the starting page. FABEL is also mentioned several times in [another chapter] and on pages 30 and 126. Great care has clearly been exercised on the preparation of the text and diagrams, and it is unfortunate that this aspect of the book has, by comparison, been neglected.'


'Volume 2 includes an alphabetical index of events, a subject/keyword index, an index placing articles in their topic category and an index of principal personages. These are well done, apart from an irritating insistence on referring to the National Library
INDEXES REVIEWED

of France and nowhere to the Bibliothèque Nationale (as used in
the article). The BL is not mentioned.

G.K. Hall: Avery's choice: five centuries of great architectural

'The volume is indexed for author, title and date of publication,
although one could have wished for a topical or geographical
index so that all the works coming from a particular country
could be found.'

G.K. Hall: Women in context: two hundred years of British
women autobiographers: a reference guide and reader, ed. by

'There are three indexes to the autobiographies. The author index
groups the authors into twenty-year cohorts by date of birth... The
identification index lists vocations, activities, marital status,
religious and ethical belief systems, and social class. The subject
index lists topics addressed in the autobiographies and appears
to be quite thorough, although, unfortunately, it is an index only to
entry numbers so the subject, "Cultural Differences: Anglo and Non
Western" is followed by rows of 197 different numbers. One also
wishes that they had made the generic non-Western more
geographically specific. The treatment of geographical areas is the
only true weakness of this index. There are virtually no entries by
country, and these appear only as subheadings (e.g., British Empire:
India or Foreign Customs: India). Many topics (e.g., education,
abroad) list hundreds of entries with no further geographic
subdivision. But this is still the best bibliography of its kind.'

Lippincott-Raven (Philadelphia, PA): Internet guide for
rehabilitation professionals, by K.L. Reed and S. Cunningham
(1997, 308 pp, $29.95 inc. software HTML file). Rev. in Physical Therapy Case Reports, 1 (1).

'A list of common acronyms and an index of "emoticons" is
included, which may not be necessary for current Internet users but
could be helpful for new users... The disk is simple to use but would
be more useful if an index or search mechanism were provided to
jump from section to section, to avoid scrolling through every
address.'

Oxford University Press: Oxford companion to British history,

'To aid readers, there are maps, genealogies, and asterisked
words in entries as a form of cross-reference. The subject index
is a bit problematic in that it is a list of broad subjects (e.g., class
and rank or economics), with a list of related articles following,
but this is more than one usually gets in an Oxford companion.'

Pickering and Chatto: The 'Gentleman's Magazine' in the age
of Samuel Johnson, 1731-1745 (16 vols, 11,200 pp, £1,400).
Rev. by John Mullan, Times Literary Supplement, 1 Jan 1999.

'A supplementary volume offers the "Miscellaneous Correspondence" not originally included in the magazine but
published separately by its proprietor, Edward Cave, and as
much of Samuel Ayscough's 1818 index as covers the years
between 1731 and 1745. For all its omissions and eccentricities,
the index is particularly welcome.'

Scolar and Bohun Gallery: Julian Trevelyan: catalogue
raisonné of prints, ed. by Silvie Turner (184 pp, £65). Rev. by
James Armstrong, Times Literary Supplement, 1 Jan 1999.

'There is no overall index, but the prints are indexed by title and
theme, and there are sections on Trevelyan's printers and
publishers.'

Scribners: Encyclopedia of Africa: south of the Sahara, ed. by
John Middleton (4 vols, 2,466 pp, £320). Rev. by Roland
Oliver, Times Literary Supplement, 5 Feb 1999.

'The problem is that, so often, the particular needs to be looked for
under some much more general heading and can be reached only
by using the massive, 126-page index and checking references
spread through all four volumes. For example, in an encyclopedia
of Africa one might expect to find entries for "gold", "copper" and
"diamonds"; or for "millet", "bananas" and "yams"; or for
"mosquito", "tsetse fly" and "bilharzia"; but there are none. The
index has references to all of them, but to use these effectively one
needs to have all four heavy volumes within arm's reach.'

Indexes censured

Ablex Publishing: The information revolution, ed. by Alan L.
Maurice B. Line, Managing Information, Jan/Feb 1999.

'The index is disgraceful.'

Addison-Wesley: Focus on algebra: an integrated approach,
ed. by Randall I. Charles, Alba Gonzalez Thompson, et al. (843

'This secondary math textbook has an index that is not very
helpful. What value are more than 180 page references for the
entry "Science"? What use is a similar quantity of page numbers for the entry "Industry"?'

Bancroft Press: Live by the sword: the secret war against
Castro and the death of JFK, by Gus Russo ($26.95). Rev. by

'Though persuasive, Russo's book has imperfections. The index,
so important in a book like this, contains gaps and flaws. The
bibliography is sketchy.'

Batsford: The gardener's book of pests and diseases, by Roland

'There are no keys and not much of an index.'

British Library: Business, pollution and regulation, by S.
member) Moyra Forrest, Library Association Record, 100 (9),

'The index is not good. Adjectives (see ethical) are not normally
stand-alone index entries; and page numbers usually show the
span of treatment of a subject, not just the first page.'

Garland: Three decadent poets, Ernest Dowson, John Gray,
and Lionel Johnson: an annotated bibliography, by G.A. Cevasco
(1990, 400 pp, $60). Rev. by Brandon Gramer, Bulletin of

'The three separate indexes are primarily of the author-title nature,
with most subjects comprising almost exclusively of literary
figures. An increase in the number and scope of subject headings
would be gladly welcomed by any scholar looking into certain
elements of a poet's work and style. Cevasco's divided index
system and the sparse substantive subject headings means one will
have to flip between the three separate sections and the indexes to discover any thematic trends in scholarship concerning the three. Although this may be only a mild inconvenience to a knowledgeable and heavy user, others less versed in the decadent poets may find the volume wanting of a single subject index.'


'The book will help to give students a good start. But it is frustrating to find so lean an index, and that not all sources are referenced. Was this to try and keep the price down, or anxiety lest a greater weight of footnotes put off a popular market? Even if the latter, courting a wide readership is not to be confused with promoting the public understanding of science.'


'The index is rather modest, but the clear structure of the individual chapters makes for ease of orientation.'


'The book is, however, marred by the inclusion of lengthy and detailed author and subject indexes to the IASL Conference Proceedings and IASL newsletter — 75 pages out of a total of 258. So, some intriguing, even visionary, papers on school librarianship embedded within some fairly turgid and dull material — a bit of a "curate's egg" of a book. [Marred by its indexes? And this in the LA Record!]


'Given so much that is excellent, it is regrettable that the index is restricted to places because in a book of this kind a subject index is highly desirable.'


'Father of the Bensons in no sense pretends to be a work of original scholarship: there are no references at all to sources, no bibliography, and a barely adequate Index. Perhaps the authors consider that this excuses them from diligent proof-reading: the mysterious Lord Brendall, who must be the 2nd Marquess of Breadalbane...'


'Lesk does not equivocate in his writing and, in some cases, his statements, presented in a factual tone, are arguable. For example, Lesk writes "High-energy physics now depends entirely on a bulletin board at Los Alamos National Laboratory" (p. 214), implying that the role of the traditional scientist has been overturned by this low-tech repository of preprints. It is probable that Lesk did not mean to imply that physicists no longer publish in journals, but the quote in the book yields that impression. Finally, the index is not as well constructed as it might be, making references to both subjects and names difficult to find. For example, there was no way to locate the above quote because there are no index entries for Los Alamos, preprints, physics, or Paul Ginsparg, who administers the bulletin board. The index entry "bulletin board": points to an unrelated reference in another part of the book.'


'The index, though, needs checking. Jerome Bonaparte, whose brother Napoleon made him King of Westphalia, is included, but not St Jerome of the fourth century, who described the Celtic theologian Pelagius as "a dolt weighed down with Scots porridge". The Revd Hugh Eylon-Jones's surname should be Eytun-Jones.'


'There is only one serious defect: the Index deals almost exclusively with proper names, and the few thematic entries give less information than the Contents page. Perhaps this was a deliberate stratagem, to prevent the rest of us from quarrying for examples.'


'The index is peppered with omissions and mistakes — including a mystifying reference to George M. Cohan in Volume 7 of this six-volume work.'


'Despite the title, this is about as "Oxford" as the eponymous marmalade, with American spelling, an entry for Historical Archaeology but "post-medieval" not to be found in the index.'


'... the book has an irritatingly bad index.'


'One of those things [that we learn from this book] is that Monica Lewinsky is already part of American history. There she is, on page 604 (but not, alas, in the index).'

Indexes omitted


'My final word of criticism in an otherwise highly commendable report is that there is no index. Not only is an index a fundamental aid to any reader, but that a report suggesting ways of improving the effectiveness of information should omit this is somewhat surprising.'


'Given the scattered nature of the information, an index would have been a distinct advantage.'

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'The book is well-annotated throughout, but the absence of an index is a handicap.'


'The fundamental problem is that it does not work as a guide. There are no usable maps. Its chapters are ordered chronologically, and each contains a narrative and a gazetteer. It lacks an index or other means of cross-referencing. One cannot therefore easily visit an island and look for all the interesting historical sites.'


'Apart from the inevitable intervening deaths and changes of address, the book has deficiencies: no index, for instance.'


'But where is the index? While appreciating that contributions from a large number of people can be a logistic nightmare to control, are BL colleagues not aware that professional indexers are used to and good at producing quality work in almost unbelievably short times?'


'Although the handbook is very useful, the book would be improved by the addition of an index of the abbreviations used throughout the text. Many of the unfamiliar abbreviations that I encountered during chart reviews were included in the text. It would have been useful if I could have quickly found these abbreviations in an index and turned quickly to the relevant pages.'


'The most chronic piece of sloppiness is that there is no index of the authors quoted. Perhaps this is to prevent smart-alecs like me from totting up the numbers of quotes from each author and saying, "It is curious that Rees gives us 29 quotations by Bill Bryson and only two from Charles Dickens." (I have no idea if this is the case.)'


'There is a 13-page glossary, but regrettably no index.'


'People and incidents are what he gives us, in such profusion that at times one wished for a few more dates or even an index.' ['At times? 'Even an index?']


'His publishers have wisely refrained from adding an index to what is essentially a collection of useless information, but they have provided the useless touch of having most of the 78 essays begin between two and 13 pages away from the places listed for them under "Contents." [In fairness to the author, the reviewer does add that he is 'an entertaining master of this journalistic sub-craft' (the collection of useless information).]


'Regrrettably, there is no index, and the book is shot through with typographical errors.'


'... a useful companion to his creative work... though one criticism of it must be the lack of an index and the classification of the pieces by rather odd definitions of genre, rather than chronologically.' ['I make that two criticisms.]


'Sadly, there is no index.'


'It has no index. It offers no explanation of sources for each piece of new information. Its title has no lower-case explanation after it. It has no photographs — even the cover is a scarifyingly smiley design by Damien Hirst and Hugh Allan. It lacks all the reassuring technical apparatus of fact. This could be fiction. Open a page at random and it could still be fiction, almost...'


'Pinter’s exhilarating progress is distinctly traceable in this absurdly slim volume — there are even 14 blank pages at the end, which might at least have included an index.'


'The book is long, which may put off some parents; it lacks an index, and it is not always easy to match up claims in the text with references at the end of the book, which will put off some academics.'


'There is no cross-referencing between articles, and thus no immediate way for the user to know that there is often additional (or indeed conflicting) information on one subject in the entry for another. This would not be a problem if the volume contained an index; it does not.'
INDEXES REVIEWED

Gallimard (Paris): Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne, by Alexandre Kojève (3 vols, 1968/1972/1974, 360/401/532 pp, 48/52/62 fr.) Rev. by Jonathan Barnes, Times Literary Supplement, 9 Oct 1998. 'The History is unreadable. It is also useless as a work of reference: the citation of ancient texts is miserly; the volumes offer no bibliography; and they flaunt nothing so vulgar as an index. Why the work has been reprinted I cannot tell. They order this matter differently in France.'

GNP: 1000 great quotations for business, management and training, compiled by David Williams (£39). Rev. by Sue Mann, Professional Manager, Sept 1998. 'An index of the quoted would have been a bonus.'

Hodder and Stoughton: On being a Jewish Christian: its blessing and its problems (1998, £7.99). Rev. by Marcus Braybrooke, Church Times, 4 Sept 1998. 'Bishop Montefiore's very personal account of being a Jewish Christian is readable enough to take on holiday, but important enough to deserve serious discussion (and an index).' [This remark is ambiguous, but the publishers confirm that it does not in fact have an index, although it has a bibliography and a glossary of Jewish names.]

IMEC/Maison des Sciences et de l'Homme: Le commerce de la librairie en France au XIXe siècle, 1789-1914, ed. by Jean-Yves Mollier (451 pp, 280 fr.) Rev. by Graham Robb, Times Literary Supplement, 25 Sept 1998. 'The simple statistical aid of an index would have been useful. Without it, this admirably precise and selectively exhaustive volume is a vast warehouse in which particular items can only be found accidentally or by inspecting the entire stock.'

Alfred A. Knopf: Unauthorized portraits, by Edward Sorel (173 pp, $40). Rev. by Russell Connor, New York Times, 21 Dec 1998. 'The division [into sections such as "History", "Politics"] makes some sense for the general reader, but a preference for the flashback over chronology, and the lack of an index, make [Sorel]'s development less clear for students, into whose hands one dearly hopes this handsomely designed book will fall.'

Mainstream: Aleister Crowley: the beast demystified, by Roger Hutchinson (216 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Steven Poole, Guardian, 6 Feb 1999. 'So there is a yawning intellectual vacuum in this book, which also eschews notes, a bibliography, and even a proper index.'

Orion: Clinton: the Starr report (£4.99). Rev. in The Guardian (The Editor section), 19 Sept 1998. 'Sadly, there is no index and hence no easy way to look up rude words or cut straight to the chase.' [Rude words in the index?]

Picador: Living at the end of the world, by Marina Benjamin (281 pp, £12.99). Rev. by Barbara Godlee, Times Literary Supplement, 16 Oct 1998. 'Although Benjamin's notes are very adequate, there is no index...'

Politicò's: So you want to be a lobbyist?: the inside story of the political lobbying industry, by Corinne Souza (272 pp, £15). Rev. by Alfred Sherman, Spectator, 12 Dec 1998. '...the book is a reminder that publishing is a craft to be learned like any other; it needs commissioning editors and copy-editors, discipline and professionalism. We are given an unstructured, emotional, wordy and over-long splurge without any of the retrieval apparatus necessary in what was designed as a work of reference and guidance; it lacks even an index.... The book is filled with information, lists of organisations, people, backgrounds, recent history, though the lack of structure or an index limits its practical value.'

Riverhead Books: Shakespeare: the invention of the human, by Harold Bloom (745 pp, $35). Rev. by John F. Andrews, Book World (supplement to The Washington Post), 15 Nov 1998. '[The author] and his publisher will be taken to task for their neglect to supply such minimal courtesies as an index, a set of footnote citations, and a bibliographical listing of the small cadre of current professionals whom Bloom deigns to mention by name.... This could have been an important contribution to our appreciation of a significant heritage. It might have been a volume that merited its nomination for a National Book Award. Unfortunately it's a grave disappointment, and I fear that the pleasure it affords most readers will come at the price of a regrettable accumulation of exasperation.'

Routledge/Bristol: The collected social and political works of William Cobbett, ed. by Noel Thompson and David Eastwood (17 vols, £1,200). Rev. by Richard West, Times Literary Supplement, 25 Dec 1998. 'Let those admirers be warned, however, that, quite apart from its price, this is not a work for the general reader. Nor is it really a new edition.... The original books and pamphlets keep their original pagination, so there would be no means of looking up names and references, even if the publishers had provided an index.'

RCGP: RCGP Handbook of sexual health in primary care, ed. by Y. Carter, C. Moss and A. Weyman (1998). Rev. by Chris Barclay, Trends in Urology, Gynaecology and Sexual Health, Jan/Feb1999. 'The RCGP Handbook is the only medical textbook without an index I can recall having ever seen: was it left out by accident or was its omission deliberate?'

Simon & Schuster: A house divided, by Mary Allen (1998,304 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Keith Cooper, The Spectator, 17 Oct 1998. 'Frustratingly, my review copy of Mary Allen's diaries had no index. Well, if you had worked with her, wouldn't you go straight to the index to see how many times your name appeared?'

The Stationery Office: The Stephen Lawrence inquiry, by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny (1999, £26). Rev. in Private Eye, no. 971 5 March 1999. 'The central theme of Sir William Macpherson's sustained attack on the police team who investigated Stephen Lawrence's murder is the police failure to arrest the suspects as soon as their names became known. This is described again and again in the report as "the fundamental and fatal error". Yet, incredibly, the rambling, ill-written report has no index or chronology.'

St Martin's Griffin: How to write it, how to sell it: everything a screenwriter needs to know about Hollywood, by Linda Palmer (300 pp, $21.99). Rev. by Lynn Caldwell, Pier, 17-31 Dec 1998. 'More entertainment than textbook, I devoured this book as if it were a gripping novel. One gripe I have is that there is no index.'

economy (if the authors want the book to be taken seriously) to deprive the reviewer or interested reader of a ready reference to when and where the characters appeared and to what they said or did."


‘And this edition [of an encyclopedia of Roman law translated from the Latin by 29 translators] has an extra inconvenience: unlike the hardback and the sixth-century original, it has no page numbers. And as in the original, there is no index, only a relatively opaque opening list of section titles; for example, for Books Six to Nine: “Vindication”, “Usufruct”, “Servitude”, “If a four-footed animal is alleged to have committed Pauperies”. The English translation willfully preserves the opacity of the original.’

[This must be the first time that a reviewer has had occasion to reprimand an emperor for not providing an index to his work.]


‘Cantell’s book is not a scholarly piece of historical writing. It has no bibliography, and no name index, which is a pity, because it gives information about many people which is otherwise difficult to find.’


‘And surely the book deserves a real index, not just a list of proper names.’


‘Part of the problem is the format, which cobbles together 20 years of writings from publications as varied as the *New York Review of Books* and *Slavic Review*, the latter of which is unlikely to win any new readers based on the samples included here. This results in frequent redundancies and overlaps from essay to essay, which is made more irksome by the lack of an index.’

**Obiter dicta**


‘Some publishers provide assistance such as checking references or helping with index compilation or getting copyright permissions. What is beneficial to the author is being able to identify those publishers who have the resources and willingness to provide such skilled tasks as indexing — a task in which most authors have little competence. However, it is surprising to note how many of the larger names in legal publishing still expect authors to compile their own indexes.’


‘Dawkins [withholds] the identity of an eminent (unscholarly) ecologist holding forth stupidly about Gaia (though this might be the carefulness of lawyers; the index indicates there is a reference to Teddy Goldsmith on the page where the anecdote appears).’


‘Until now, it has been available only in printed form, in twenty-three large volumes, some 16,200 pages or 13 million words at a total cost of over £1,000. Now it has been made available on CD-ROM, at half the cost and very cheaply.... Above all, the ability to search the database means that, in effect, a kind of index has been added where there was none before (save to the prefaces). As such, it will be welcome as making more available an authoritative source not only in this country but throughout the world.... The publishers suggest that the availability of the full text “provides for the first time a full indexing facility for the *History* and grants full access to the wealth of a unique scholarly resource”.’

It is a word-search facility rather than an index which has been made available, and there is a difference. In the process of indexing a book, the indexer has to use intelligence and discrimination. ‘The search facility is machine-controlled and inflexible, and sometimes searches lead to bafflement and frustration. For example, a word search for “Wales” resulted in some claimed references, which were not to be found. Nevertheless, the facility is a great aid to tracing nuggets of information from this huge source.’


‘Although meticulously researched and organised... it’s still hard work to read from beginning to end unless you’re quite interested in the recent history of Radio 1. I suggest looking in the index under “John Peel” and reading everything he has to say....’


‘Kitty, an indexer by profession, figures Virgil [her lover] as “a very difficult manuscript. It has masses of cross-references. The author keeps jumping from one subject to another. I am finding it very hard to keep pace with him. He’s provided me with quite a challenge.”’


‘It’s written in the kind of prose that dares earnest dolts to fire off extracts to *Pseuds’ Corner*, they will have missed the point, as will those who grumble at the book’s comedy index (“most exhilirating [sic] song ever written about someone expending too much energy on a wedding invitation, the, 214”).’

[Reviewer’s ‘sic’.


‘James Fox is [Phyllis Langhorne’s] grandson, but he gives her only just over two columns of entries in his index, while Nancy has four and a half, with a long section on “character”. It has subheadings for “ambition”, “attacks on children” (only her own) [so that’s all right then], “bullying”, “cruelty”, “energy”, “as entertainer”, “friendliness”, “generosity”, “inability to show affection”, “loyalty”, “possessiveness”, “tactlessness”, “as tomboy” (she did cartwheels for Plymouth constituents while electioneering there), “wit”, “yearning for good”. The longest entry is for “possessiveness”, while “wit” is the runner-up.... Phyllis gets no “character” subsection in the index, but one instead on “interests”: it has just three entries — “horsemanship”, “hunting” and “intellectual circles”.’

INDEXES REVIEWED

‘Long of fuse and sweet of temper, [Elisabeth Frink, the sculptor] was nonetheless annoyed by any misspelling of her name, and in these underchecked pages there’s certainly nothing official about the orthography. In student days, to ferry her sculpture, she bought an old London taxi from Tristam Cary (Tristam? Check index: Carey, Tristan). Among many portraits she “did” John Pope-Hennessey (check index: Pope-Hennessy, John; double-check DNB: Pope-Hennessy). Huw Wheldon, who “did” her on telly, is substandardised to Weldon in both references. Far from pouring cold water on a worthy biography, I am showing the tip of the book’s iceberg which nearly sinks it: this chilling inaccuracy... tough men like Nigel Brouckes (or “Broakes, Sir Nigel!” in the index) melted to her as she “did” their busts.’


‘My number of references in the index easily surpass Cilla Black, Sir Ernst Gombrich and Khalil Gibran together. The index is a hilarious gloss on the entire book and should be issued as a pamphlet: “Cook, Robin, compared to squirrel... Mandelson, Peter, and tiara” and so on.’ [Bel Littlejohn is a pseudonym for Bel Littlejohn, ed. by Craig Brown (1998, 246 pp, £9.99). Rev. by Tim Yeo, Country Life, 30 Oct 1997.

‘The economy, the public services and most of foreign policy are simply ignored. Look up “Europe” in the index, and you find “Common Market”, leading to a couple of references to Britain’s first attempt to join in 1961.’

The new seekers

‘Studies show that people who use the World Wide Web spend much of their time just trying to locate useful material by employing so-called search engines. That’s a sign of both the vastness of the Web and its confusing lack of organization. It’s as if book readers spent most of their time at the table of content and index... I use Alta Vista, owned by Compaq Computer, when I’m looking for a narrow term or phrase or name that is unlikely to have many whole sites devoted to it, but that may be hidden in sites on other topics. Since Alta Vista uses computers to index individual words, it’s great for this.’


Love of God: not found

The following letter was written by SI member Professor K.G.B. Bakewell to the Church Times, which chose not to publish it.


“One of the book’s predominating themes is precisely the love of God,” wrote the Bishop. As I was preaching on God’s love the following Sunday, I went straight to my copy and looked in the index but found no entry under either “God” or “love”.

Yes, as the Bishop says, the book does have an index — but clearly not a very good one!’

A mixed blessing?

‘As a person Priscilla Napier was principled, tenacious, occasional- ally critical, generous with her laughter and her friendship. Blessedly she retained her enviable faculties to the end — not many 88-year-olds can produce an index of 72 handwritten foolscap pages in a fortnight. And, come to think of it, not many publishers want to receive one.’


Who indexed Tolkien?

‘[Pauline Baynes, the illustrator of C.S. Lewis’s Narnia books] was 27 when some of her Anglo-Saxon style illustrations for J.R.R. Tolkien brought her to the notice of Lewis, who was a good friend of the author of The Lord of the Rings.... Unaware of their value, she handed over Lewis’s letters to his brother, Warnie, after the writer’s death in 1963. Later she also parted with her Tolkien correspondence to a couple indexing his books.’ [The identity of this couple appears to be unknown, although a Mrs N. Smith is mentioned in a note to the 1982 edition as having prepared material for a complete index. Does anyone know who they were?]


Indexing online help

‘In hard-copy documents, tables of contents and indexes are essential tools for the readers to find what they want. In online help, the Contents and Index tabs are also essential, because the users cannot just “flip through” the online help.... Generating an Index tab automatically includes the names of all topics as entries, but you should also insert markers into the topics to flag terms you want included in the index. Even though users can do full-text searches of topics, they shouldn’t have to rely on that ability to find the information they need. A thorough Index tab can save users a lot of time when they are searching for specific information.’


Poorly indexed Vandals

‘If the Vandals were truly that much worse than the rest, one might expect to find that distinction reflected in the pages of Edward Gibbon, who finished his Decline and fall of the Roman Empire in 1787. I can’t pretend to have read every word, and my old Everyman edition has a cruelly inadequate index, but a rapid route march through Gibbon’s pages over the weekend suggests that the Vandals may indeed have been too much vilified.’


What is news?

‘Robert Scheer, in his Los Angeles Times review of Spin Cycle [by Howard Kurtz of The Washington Post], noted that the index included eighteen references to Paula Jones and sixteen to John Huang but none to Saddam Hussein...’


Journal indexing

‘On acceptance, an [academic] article or paper is edited by the journal.... Journals distribute published research efficiently through an arterial system of subscribing libraries, and for the end-user the contents of the journal are “free”, guaranteed fresh and delivered in timely fashion to his institution’s doorstep. Most important, they have indexes and shelvable back-numbers. This makes for easy retrieval, cross-reference, correction,
confirmation, argument and contradiction.'
John Sutherland, 'Who owns John Sutherland?', London Review of Books, 7 Jan 1999

CD-ROMS and indexing fiction
'But that doesn't mean that I'm a Luddite. I think, for example, that CD-ROMs have certain advantages, such as enabling one to search for a particular word. I've always wished that novels had indices. An index would be immensely helpful for the times when you encounter a minor character on page 497 of War and Peace whom you know you've met before but just can't remember. Searching for a name on a CD-ROM would be the easiest thing in the world. And I think that universal library access would be wonderful. Some day, as soon as a book is printed it will be simultaneously put into digital form. That will be a wonderful research tool, but it will never substitute for holding the book. I feel certain that at least within my lifetime, everyone will still be going to the bookstore and buying printed books. Thank God I'll die before I have to worry about whether the printed book itself will disappear. That's something I don't want to live to see.'
Anne Fadiman, interviewed in Atlantic Monthly, 28 Oct. 1998

The French do it differently...
'It may be significant that the French, who have never quite seen the point of biography, have also only recently discovered the index. A French author, traditionally, has expected his or her book to be read in the order, and according to the logical arrangement, in which it was written, and instinctively resented the idea, implicit in an index, that readers might simply use it as a tool — might come to it for all sorts of different purposes.'

Non-judgmental index
'In Roget's fourth edition (1977), the synonyms for bad person outnumber the synonyms for good person by almost three to one. Synonyms for vice outnumber synonyms for virtue more than two to one. When we get to the fifth edition (1992) good person and bad person don't even appear in the index presumably because such classifications are too judgmental. What if the bad person we want to call a bald-faced liar was committing perjury only to protect his family?' [Who on earth can the writer be referring to?]

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Closing dates for the next two issues: 30 June 1999 and 30 November 1999.

C D Needham
Chris Needham died on 28 November 1998 at the much too early age of 66. Chris's contributions to indexing were immense. In my Manual of cataloguing practice, published in 1972, I mentioned him as one of five writers to whom I was particularly indebted and who had breathed new life into our subject.

After many years lecturing at what used to be the Polytechnic of North London and is now the University of Westminster, Chris became, in retirement, an indexing consultant for the Children's Britannica. He was also on the Editorial Board of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

For five years Chris was my external examiner at Liverpool Polytechnic and I much appreciated his advice. His death is a sad loss to the world of indexing and our sympathy goes out to his widow, his two daughters and his three grandchildren.

Ken Bakewell