INDEXES REVIEWED

edited by Christine Shuttleworth

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


‘To end on a positive note, however, the book is beautifully presented, the indexing is comprehensive and accurate, the symbols used throughout the text are grouped together in a single list at the beginning, and the table of contents is full and detailed.’


‘To navigate around, there are a number of indexes including Subject specialties, Services offered and a Geographic index. There is also a useful How to use the directory section. Information is clearly laid out and it is obvious at a glance what an organisation has to offer, although in a number of cases this amounts to very little.’


‘The detailed 226 page index provides for both simple and multiple references, together with cross-references, and gives a number to look up in the straightforward alphabetical entry list. However, rather than look up a reference number, many people might like to go directly from the index to a page number. I think that I would myself, but after the first occasion one soon becomes used to searching the pages for the clearly marked reference number.... The CD-ROM contains all the features of the hard copy. It too is easy to access and was found to be “user friendly”. There is an intelligent keyword search facility, a dedicated helpdesk support line and a seemingly comprehensive index.’


‘The index gives full details of all the items covered, and some readers may want to get stuck into the case studies first and then see how the framework fits.’


‘Finally, there is a relatively comprehensive, 14-page index at the back of the book.’


‘It comes with a comprehensive bibliography and indexes, and a chronology of history and literature in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and continental Europe. It can be expected to remain an essential guide to the literature of this period.’


‘There is an extensive index and the book is fully annotated.’


‘This is much more difficult than it looks. The compilers have had to deal with misprints and alternative names, variant texts, modern editors’ emendations, characters in disguise, animals and inanimate objects, “ghost” characters, generic characters and lost plays. It is also much more useful than it looks. Not only are the characters listed by name(s), but there are entries for their occupations, real and fictitious, locations and psychological and religious proclivities. This book is the only place where these disparate pieces of information can be conveniently brought together. There are also alphabetical indexes of plays and authors, and a bibliography of scholarship on character types.’


‘The index, placing all significant references to people, books and articles, will soon become a standard reference point for all Eliot scholars.’ [But see also Two Cheers!]


‘Eric Anderson’s fine edition of the Journal is the fourth, and easily the best. Its biographical commentary is so indispensable, so generously helpful and well informed, that it deserves a place on the shelves of every reader of literature. It is good to have this reset issue available at a reasonable price, with all the splendid notes and appendices of 1972, and the marvellous index (although not the maps).’


‘The index is useful as it distinguishes between figures and tables within the page numbers.’


‘Ricketts tells this human story efficiently, without imposing any particular shape on it (and with a good index).’


‘Occupations 99 is superbly indexed. We may not wish to dwell on the uncomfortable juxtaposition of Funeral Director and Furnace Operator but we can only marvel at our ability to look up Welsh-speaking Camera Operator or Summer Show Performer or Coating
Machinewoman/woman. Indexer itself is an occupation deservedly included in such admirably comprehensive coverage. [Index by Paul Nash, RI, who has prepared the index for this annual publication for the last nine years.]


‘Some will lament the lack of the A–Z index system of the paper version.’ [With good reason, apparently.]


‘A “type-ahead” list scrolls through the word index as you type a search term, enabling you to see at a glance the indexed words in the field you are currently searching.’


‘This encyclopedia is particularly user-friendly, with an excellent and comprehensive index.’


‘Its critical essays also carry bibliographies such as “Lists of Selected Works” and “Further Reading”, together with a comprehensive “General Index” and a “Titles and First Line Index”. It is a fine reference book to be in the stock of any good reference library.’


‘The main part of the encyclopedia consists of an alphabetical list of approximately 120 broad themes, such as abandonment, madness, witchcraft, melancholy, etc. In addition, there are seven indexes that enable the reader to find specific mythological, historical, and Judeo-Christian personages, places, and concepts referenced to the Bible, the Koran, and other religious texts, non-Western cultures, religions and mythologies, artists, authors, composers, filmmakers, and literary texts, and a subject index (called “Other Names and Terms”), all of which refer back to the essays. This is a refreshing approach to a subject that is often presented in a single alphabet, without benefit of the thematic arrangement that will satisfy the contextual requirements essential to iconographic interpretation and understanding.’


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


‘Especially enriched is the index with more subject and geographical terms.’


‘AIR’s articles spoof everything from scientific pretentiousness to bad grammar to the existence of God — by Einstein, even the index is funny.’


‘The volume ends with a good subject index.’


‘The book ends with a thorough index, essential now that so many roses are sold under a different name in each country and the only way to find old favourites such as “Spek’s Yellow”, The Times Rose and Margaret Thatcher that appear as “Golden Scepter”, “Marianiell” and “Flamingo” respectively.’


‘Cross-references and an index with main entries noted in boldface are valuable aids.’


‘The only genuinely funny chapter is the Index, which works along the lines of: “Melly, George, memorable party trick of”.’


‘A bibliography and an excellent index (with Greek common names) round out this indispensable guide.’


‘Thankfully, an index allows its usage as a reference source.’


‘Detailed and critical indices at the end of the volume reveal the riches of the book.’


‘It has a good index and detailed notes showing the sources for each case history.’


‘... and the index is readable and useful.’


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


‘This New History is the English translation of the French Nouvelle Histoire de la Photographie (1994); it is at once an expansive (and well-indexed) encyclopedia, an anthology of essays, an archive of photographs and an all-round gorgeous production.’

Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins: Writing and publishing in medicine, by Edward J. Huth (348 pp, £34.95). Rev. by Hervé Maisonneuve, European Science Editing, 25 (2), June 1999.

‘It is well printed and the data are easily accessible with the index.’


‘Changing Ones contains a formidable array of glossaries, notes and tribal indexes, as well as a bibliography with more than 800 entries...’
Mansell: Collective biography of women in Britain, 1550–1900: a select annotated bibliography, by Sybil Oldfield (1998, £60). Rev. by J. D. Hendry, Library Association Record, 101 (8), Aug. 1999. ‘It is organised chronologically, and has both a category and name index.’


Practice Management Information Corporation: Hematology, ed. by Robert E. Goyette, MD (1997, 1001 pp, $79.95). Rev. by Jay Porthnow, AMWA Journal, 14 (3), summer 1999. ‘The book is well organized, the table of contents is useful in directing the reader to the proper areas, the index is thorough, and the references at the end of each chapter are up to date and well organized by subject area.’

Radcliffe Medical Press: Clinical effectiveness made easy, by Ruth Chambers (1998, 132 pp, £16.50). Rev. by Vincent Forte, Update, 18 Mar 1999. ‘There are very useful explanations of all the practical techniques involved, and references, a list of useful publications and a good index round off a concise guide for the novice.’


Random House: This new ocean: the story of the first space age, by William E. Burrows (1998, 741 pp, $34.95, £27.50). Rev. by G. Siegfried Kutter, Nature, vol. 398, 4 March 1999. ‘It could be used as a general reference on the subject (the index is thorough and well laid out); and it would serve well as a text for advanced university courses on the history of space exploration. I recommend it highly.’

Routledge: Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy, ed. by Edward Craig (10 vols, 1998, £2995). Rev. by Junko Stuveras, College & Research Libraries, 60 (2), March 1999. ‘Volume 10 furnishes an extensive index that brings together related articles. For example, under “medical ethics,” volume and pages of the main article are indicated in bold characters followed by related articles in other volumes from “doctor/patient relationship” to the “Tuuskegee project.” If you look up a country, entries on philosophers of the country are listed alphabetically along with some topics important to the country’s history of philosophy.’

Springer Verlag: Slanted truths: essays on Gaia, symbiosis and evolution, by L. Margulis and D. Sagan (1997, 368 pp, £16.95). Rev. by Stanley Ford, Geoscientist, Feb. 1999. ‘There are 13 pages of references, in addition to cross-references between essays, separate dated lists of professional and popular literature on Gaia (seven pages) and a very full index (13 pages in double column).’

Virgin: I don’t like that!, by Geoff Tibballs (£7.99). Rev. by Matthew Dunn, Sunday Express, 6 June 1999. ‘The oft-forgotten index at the back of such a populist book means this is a valuable reference work for those perhaps wishing to emulate the masters during the pep-talk before a vital Sunday morning cup match on Hackney Marshes.’


Weidenfeld: The world’s banker: the history of the house of Rothschild, by Niall Ferguson (309 pp, £30). Rev. by Paul Johnson, Sunday Telegraph, 25 Oct 1998. ‘The notes are full and the index exemplary. So this hefty tome will have an honoured place on my shelves.’

John Wiley & Sons: An introduction to applied and environmental geophysics, by J. M. Reynolds (1997, 796 pp, £60/£24.95). Rev. by Douglas Nichol, Geoscientist, Jan. 1999. ‘The mini-case histories are presented at the end of each chapter, and the teaching value is enhanced by helpful advice on further reading and an extensive index.’

Two cheers!

Addison Wesley Longman: Basic palaeontology, by M. J. Burton and D. A. T. Harper (1997, 342 pp, £22.99). Rev. by Liz Harper, Geological Magazine, Nov. 1998. ‘There is a single index which is good in that it has many entries, but it is perhaps not as exhaustive as it might be. An interested student might look up calcite, for example, which is obviously mentioned many times at various points in the book, to be rewarded with a single page number.’

A.L. Balkema: Karst waters and environmental impacts, ed. by G. Gunay and A. J. Johnson (1997, 525 pp, £90). Rev. by Anthony Cooper, Geoscientist, Nov. 1998. ‘The book has an author index, but like most conference proceedings does not include a subject index; the groupings of the papers helps to overcome this shortfall.’ [Oh, good.]

Blackie: Food chemical risk analysis, ed. by D. R. Tennant (1998, 470 pp, £89). Rev. by J. Ralph Blanchfield, International Journal of Food Science & Technology, 33, Aug 1998. ‘There is a surprisingly brief index (3½ pages); but this is counterbalanced by 8½ contents pages, listing the detailed breakdown of topics within each chapter.’

Cambridge University Press: The journals of George Eliot, ed. by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (447 pp, £55). Rev. by Gillian Beer, Sunday Times, 25 April 1999. ‘The explanatory index is invaluable in its brief accounts of correspondents, though not entirely reliable in recording all their appearances.’

McFarland & Co: Plagiarism, copyright violation and other thefts of intellectual property: an annotated bibliography with a lengthy introduction, by Judy Anderson (1998, 201 pp, £34.20). Rev. by Graham Cornish, Library Association Record, 101 (4), April 1999. ‘There is an author index and a subject index which seemed quite reasonable although I could find no trace of the famous Williams & Wilkins National Library of Medicine case...’

Macmillan: Political handbook of the world 1998, ed. by Arthur S. Banks and Thomas C. Muller (1998, 1287 pp, £89). Rev. by Caroline Soper, International Affairs, 75 (1), Jan. 1999. ‘An improvement in the 1998 edition compared with previous volumes is its coverage of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)... One quibble is that certain new IGOs appear in existing entries rather than under their own headings, but they can be located by means of the subject index. Much less satisfactory is the names index, which lists only the first reference to persons featuring in the country sections and completely ignores those in the IGOs. Thus Blair and Clinton have only one page reference each, despite their frequent appearance elsewhere in the volume, and Kofi Annan does not appear in the index at all.’ [An economical approach to indexing, but a somewhat bizarre one.]
‘I found the subject index to be adequate, but not always complete in its listings.’

Indexes censured


‘The value of a large multivolume work that is not an encyclopaedia is so dependent on a good index. In addition to the index volume, there is a comprehensive index to each volume (with occasional cross-indexing to other volumes) provided at the end of each volume. With the size of this work, it would be difficult for the indices in the printed version to provide complete coverage of the text, and indeed there are omissions from the indices in the book version. Space constraints on this review permit only one example. In Chapter 7 of volume 3, on pages 78 and 80, there is mention of “JK corynebacteria”, but on the next page the reader wishing to know more about the nature of these organisms will find no listing in the index. The reader needs to know that they are also referred to as Corynebacterium jeikeium – then can the other cross-reference to ‘JK corynebacteria’ be found on page 361, together with other references to both volumes 2 and 3, and information about their importance as multiple drug-resistant pathogens in people who are immunodeficient or fitted with prostheses. I assume that the user of the CD-ROM version would not find this obstacle to obtaining information, because full word and search facilities are available on the CD-ROM.’


‘Also, when topics do occur in more than one chapter all the relevant references are not always given in the index.’


‘The index, covering all chapters, appears at the end of each volume, is not extensive, and the editor’s advice is to use the index in conjunction with the Table of Contents. It may have been useful, therefore, to have had a Table of Contents at the start of each chapter, in addition to having all chapter contents provided at the start of each volume. [Or why not just have a more extensive index?]’


‘A shame though that the index doesn’t list individual poems.’


‘The chapters are well written in a consistent style and are well organized with little repetition, but where this occurs there is a lack of cross-referencing which would have been overcome by a more extensive index.’


‘Apart from a general index arranged alphabetically by organisation or journal title, the directory includes a sectoral index. Unfortunately, the latter is decidedly eccentric, as is apparent from the first entry. Under the heading for Accounting, a Bermudan organisation is listed, but none of the accounting bodies for the UK and other major countries. Subject headings are often too broad, for example, Economics and Market research, with the list of sources sprawling over several pages. Some headings are plain silly – who is going to look under General library? However, the most bizarre feature of this index is the headings with only one source or a handful of sources. Although the aerospace industry is concentrated in North America and Europe, the only body listed under Aerospace is in China. The sole entry under Hairdressing relates to Switzerland. Both entries under Giftware refer to Mexico, whereas Carpets and floorcoverings lists a solitary trade association in Afghanistan. Some key bodies, such as the Association of British Insurers, are omitted and other sources categorised in a highly original, but not very helpful, fashion. Thus the Economist magazine is included under Art and Stockbroker reports, a database called Information Technology is categorised under Instrument engineering, and the Financial Times Actuaries Share Indices Service is placed under Insurance.

‘The confusion as to coverage and the appalling standard of indexing are particularly sad, as a lot of work has clearly gone into compiling the main body of the work.’


‘Incidentally, both Kuhn and Julia Kristeva find their way into the text, but not the index.’


‘His book could have used better editing, and the index is unreliable.’


‘... her publishers have felt it necessary to scatter poor postcard reproductions of Dutch paintings throughout the text, presumably because they think we haven’t seen any or that the text doesn’t describe them well enough. They are uncaptioned and unpaginated in the index and have no relationship to the shape of the page.’


‘There is no separate listing of relevant case law, and where cases are mentioned (such as Shetland Times v. Shetland News), there is no accompanying citation to lead the reader to the full law report, nor is the case mentioned in the index to the book.’

Rev. by Charles Oppenheim, Managing Information, 6 (4), May 1999.

‘The blurb tells us the book has been “fully revised” and that it has a “detailed index”. Both statements are untrue. The bulk of the test is identical to the previous edition, and the index, although better than the deplorable index in the second edition, is still pretty basic.’


‘The book’s own index, though very full, has a number of shortcomings. There are no entries for “evaluative abstracts”, “bibliographic scatter” or “literature scatter” (though the locators for the last two subjects can be found under “scatter”). The entries for “Postcoordinate indexes, compared with precoordinate” and “Precoordinate indexes, compared with postcoordinate” should clearly be identical but are not. “Mini-abstracts” should precede, not follow, “Minka”. The author shows his disregard for ISO 999 by beginning every index heading with a capital letter, though this may be the publisher’s house style. Strings of locators are generally avoided except for cited authors; the worst example being the 25 locators under “Lancaster, F. W.!”’


‘His documentation is pretty solid (though the index is spotty)...’

Oxford University Press: The medieval landscape of Wessex (Oxbow Monograph No. 46), ed. by Michael Aston and Carenza Lewis

INDEXES REVIEWED
The bulk of the bibliography (some 2,905 citations) is arranged alphabetically from online sources. When we turn to printed bibliographies for the sort of access we cannot get from a book or article, this kind of sloppy indexing is inexcusable at a time when we would be fine if there were an adequate index, but the index is seriously flawed. For example, “Women and Shi’ism in Iran” by Mina Modarres was not listed under Shi’ism, Iran, or Women. Articles that have been indexed are almost as difficult to find. For example, Marchia Herman’s “The Female Hero in the Islamic Religious Tradition” does not appear under either religion, hero, or heroine but, instead, under Islam – the female hero in (filling alphabetically under “t” for “the”). It appears that most of the indexing is based on words in the title of the article, rather than upon any sort of understanding of the subject of the book or article. This kind of sloppy indexing is inexcusable at a time when we turn to printed bibliographies for the sort of access we cannot get from online sources.

The bulk of the bibliography (some 2,905 citations) is arranged alphabetically by author with no annotations... The author arrangement would be fine if there were an adequate index, but the index is seriously flawed. Many articles are not listed in the subject index at all. For example, “Women and Shi’ism in Iran” by Mina Modarres was not listed under Shi’ism, Iran, or Women. Articles that have been indexed are almost as difficult to find. For example, Marchia Herman’s “The Female Hero in the Islamic Religious Tradition” does not appear under either religion, hero, or heroine but, instead, under Islam – the female hero in (filling alphabetically under “t” for “the”). It appears that most of the indexing is based on words in the title of the article, rather than upon any sort of understanding of the subject of the book or article. This kind of sloppy indexing is inexcusable at a time when we turn to printed bibliographies for the sort of access we cannot get from online sources.

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If this book is to be used as some sort of vade mecum, the index could be more comprehensive, e.g., “past tense” instead of “verb tenses”.

Supplementing the master list [of women authors of crime fiction] are a chronology of series characters by date of introduction, an alphabetical index of pseudonyms referring to real names and an alphabetical index of characters referring to authors. The latter is rather irritatingly arranged by the first name of the character, such as Adam rather than Dalglish (and even Miss rather than Marple!), but such quibbles do not negate the overall value of this book which is clearly a labour of love.

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I should have welcomed an index of authors with a one-line biography to all the topics and technical terms it explains so well, it does contain a chronology of series characters by date of introduction, an alphabetical index of pseudonyms referring to real names and an alphabetical index of characters referring to authors. The latter is rather irritatingly arranged by the first name of the character, such as Adam rather than Dalglish (and even Miss rather than Marple!), but such quibbles do not negate the overall value of this book which is clearly a labour of love. [A little more love devoted to the index might not have gone amiss.]

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‘The only negative aspects of the book were that I found the index to be rather limited and I would have preferred to have seen chapters 7 and 12 and the appendix, which deal with mycotoxins, to run consecutively. But these are minor points...’ [Are they, indeed?]
There is no index... the omission of an index makes the work less valuable for professionals wishing to check back on themes.


There is no index...


‘The book has the potential for being a very valuable source, but how can the reader use it as a reference when there is no index?’


‘Gore-Browne’s biography sounds like a novel – if not a Hollywood film – and Christina Lamb in The Africa House writes it as one, omitting note or index, though she includes a bibliography.’


‘There appears to be no editorial intervention of any kind – no preface, no index, just a solitary footnote helpfully explaining the phrase “it’s not cricket”, with nothing to say whose footnote it is.’


‘A Life unnumbered with index or footnotes is a daring thing and arguably welcome, but it will pose problems for a reader who is not a Joyce aficionado: names such as Stanislus and Budgen are thrown in with little explanation as to their place in things.’


‘The absence of an index also undermines the seriousness of her thesis.’

Obiter dicta


‘If the size of A la recherche prompts comparison with Balzac and Wagner, Proust’s correspondence was on a similarly vast scale. As an appendix to Philip Kolb’s painstaking twenty-one-volume edition of the letters published between 1970 and 1993, we now have an encyclopaedic Index général de la correspondance de Marcel Proust, the work of a group of forty Japanese Proustians. What Kazuyoshi Yoshikawa’s team have compiled is a series of indexes encompassing both the correspondence itself and Kolb’s copious erudite glosses. The result is a dense matrix of cross-references to rival the busy network of people, places and allusions in the novel itself. For Proust’s Paris, for example, we get a thirty-page A to Z, bulging with references from the Aéro-Club and the Allée des Acacias to the exclusive Café Weber and the Yacht-Club de France, via Proust’s private addresses: Boulevard Malesherbes, rue de Courcelles, Boulevard Haussmann and rue Hamelin. ... Sheer quantity in the Index général is no guarantee of posthumous glory. Hence the bulky entries for minor contemporary literary figures – although the fawning Proust would never have referred to them in these terms – such as Anna de Noailles and Robert de Montesquiou outweigh those for Balzac, Flaubert and Baudelaire. Yoshikawa’s volume also sheds light on Proust’s inventive obsessiveness. Thus a string of juvenile pet-names for Reynaldo Hahn, Proust’s lover of the mid-1890s, includes: “Binibuls, Binunuls, Errnuls, Fernuls, Guminuls, Irnibuls, Mintchnibuls, Tinénnuls, Vinchtnibuls”. This brief sample – the Index général throws up nearly ninety variants for Hahn – gives proof, it were needed, that the high aesthetic seriousness of A la recherche was indeed the work of the same author as these inane, hysterical nicknames.’


INDEXES REVIEWED

‘... it [the Stephen Lawrence report by Mr Justice Macpherson] is a shoddy piece of work which sweeps allegations of corruption under the carpet and is, besides being badly written, hard to follow and lacking even the benefit of an index.’


‘When I first used the Net I did what most net virgins are said to do: typed my name into a search engine. I sat back and waited. After a minute or so one response popped up: For “Rusbridger” try the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

It made no sense. I double-clicked and waited (this was the early 90s: things were slow back then.) “Rusbridger” turned out to be in the index to the archive of Tom Stoppard’s papers which had been lodged with the University. This puzzled me, for I could not remember ever having written to Tom Stoppard. Then I recalled that I had once dropped him a postcard 10 years previously while editing a Christmas round up of Books of the Year. This was presumably the precious document meticulously archived and indexed in Austin, Texas.

I was first dazzled then disappointed. All that awesome computing power labouring to produce such a trifling mouse! How useless and how sad. The nerds could keep the Net.’


[Alan Rusbridger goes on to reveal how he became a convert to the Net.]

‘One scholar I know argued that he could stand books with academic flabby writing, endless cross-references, and bibliographies filled mostly with the author’s previous pretentions books; the one thing he could not abide was a bad index.’


Acknowledgements

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