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

**ABC-Clio:** Classic love and romance literature, by Virginia Brackett ($75). Rev. on Bookwatch website, Jan. 2000.

Thoroughly illustrated, cross-referenced and indexed, *Classic Love and Romance Literature* is highly recommended for academic and public library collections as a superb reference which will encourage the user to seek out and read the originals.


It is more for the professional than the casual reader, and it demands some background knowledge. But it is well presented, with an excellent index and copious background notes.


It can be used as a handbook, aided by a 40 page index. For example, if you wanted to know about Iran, you could begin with a couple of pages under the appropriate subhead and pick up the story from there.


... it is an easy book in which to find one’s way around, with good maps and a useful index. [Index by SI member and Registered Indexer Patricia Hymans.]


Both books have extensive indexes, and Eason staff [at Eason Bookellers, Belfast] report that local shoppers are buying as many as half a dozen copies at a time.


One of the joys of the work is in the comprehensiveness of the index, where the reader, puzzled by the absence of Lady Gregory or J. M. Synge in their own rights, will find a combined thirty-nine references to them with an additional one each for the former’s airman son and the latter’s reputedly proselytizing archbishop uncle.


Overall the quality of its text, illustrations and indexing make this one of the best books around for its size and price. [Indexed by SI Vice-President Jill Halliday – and proofread by John Halliday.]


I found the volume easy to use and enjoyed the sections I read comprehensively. It is more difficult to dip into and quickly find information on a specific topic unless the issue is one that is identified as a major theme. I did however find the index useful in identifying the meaning of acronyms.

**Bromedia (Toronto):** *Calcium!* by David and Rachelle Broneman ($19.95). Rev. on Bookwatch website, Jan. 2000.

Complete with handy tables and index, *Calcium!* is the ideal cookbook adventure for the calcium-impaired and those who love them!


A comprehensive, easy-to-use index concludes the manual. This book is an excellent source of information, and would be a valuable addition to many veterinary libraries.


The most remarkable innovation in the new edition is an index of living people which extends to over 200 pages alone and includes some 100,000 names. If anything could convert me to the wonders of the new technology this would be it.


Edited with a view to maintaining a healthy shelf-life, the volume achieves a splendid balance of solid information with exciting scholarly research. 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.


As well as listing and describing all the better known places and visitor attractions, Fiona has come up with a few I’d never heard of before. She lists telephone numbers where appropriate, offers a good Gaelic glossary, a list of tourist attractions just outside the Badenoch and Strathspey area, with phone numbers for enquiries and best of all – an index. So many guidebooks fall down because of a lack of an index but that’s the first place you habitually look when you want to find some information.


Space precludes a systematic analysis of all 14 chapters, 4 appendices and the useful index. [Index by SI member Charles Greenwood.]

This book includes everything you wanted to know about gardening and more. Appropriate for a novice or experienced gardener, this extensive reference book contains concise accurate information on every aspect of gardening. Photos and illustrations supplement topics. Arranged by plant categories and basic cultural subjects the book is easy to use. The book contains a glossary of horticultural terms and an extensive 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.


There’s a good index, along with a glossary of terms, so you need never feel ashamed and useless because you do not know what a clerestory is.


...the index is easy to use...


...further enhanced for the reader with a comprehensive index and glossary. Highly recommended.


The book comes with a comprehensive index.


The book is concluded with a Glossary and an extensive Subject Index.


Indexing is accurate.


A broad classification at the beginning of the book and a comprehensive index allow the reader to identify specific topics if necessary.


A glance through Huntford’s index neatly summarizes his angle. Under ‘Scott, Robert Falcon’, one finds the following entries: ‘continued mistrust of dogs’...‘use of ponies’...‘Shackleton fixation’...‘quarrels and tension with companions’...‘sinking of motor sledge’...‘lost faith in motor sledge’...‘little margin of safety’...‘personal crisis’...‘forced to admit dogs’ superiority to ponies’...‘risk in adding fifth man to polar party’...‘faulty sledge meters’...[sic: perhaps this should have been ‘motors’?]...‘thirst and starvation’...‘discovery of defeat’...‘loses way’...‘collapse as leader’...‘last camp and immolation in tent’...‘self-justifying message to public’...‘as heroic bungler’. [Joel S. Berson, who submitted this item, comments: ‘This is perhaps the highest (implicit) praise that can be given in a book review to a book’s index – to cite it as the epitome of the tone and mood of the book.’ See also Obiter dicta below.]


At first glance, this book seems a jumble of topics, traditions, tastes and techniques. Broad reviews of political and economic history are interspersed with discussions of topics like shipbuilding, irrigation, spices and the Mediterranean grain trade. Recipes for seafood, lamb, pasta and vegetables are scattered throughout the book; recipes from different regions are shuffled together like a deck of cards. But two good indexes – one of general topics, the other of recipes – guide readers through the confusion; the recipes I tested were very good.


It is easy to read, has a good index and condenses most subjects into one-page quick-reference summaries.


This is a very user-friendly book. The index, so often a neglected aspect of scholarly works, has been undertaken with particular care, and difficult or technical words are consistently cross-referenced.


...also enhanced with color photos, a glossary, bibliography, and index.


There are 40 maps and tables. ...and an efficient index.


...and the book ends with an extensive index.


This book has a good-quality index consisting mainly of personal names and a thorough and extensive bibliography. However, the number of typographical errors is surprisingly high.


It presents an immense amount of information in an attractive style, and, thanks to a comprehensive contents list and a good index, in a readily retrievable form.

**Two cheers!**


There is a detailed index, but it would have been better also to have an index of business information providers and/or the products covered. At the moment these can be located only by looking for the relevant category (e.g. ‘real time data feeds’) rather than by individual provider or business information product.

It was wise of the Flavells to include an alphabetical index (although unfortunately it covers words only, not proper names), for this is not an etymological book, and information is often loosely attached to historical events.


The index is detailed, but in places there are so many sub-headings it is easy for the reader to visually lose the alphabetical order of the index.


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, although the author appears to discuss other aspects of library copying and photocopying in the bibliography. In that sense the lack of a scope note is a serious deficiency in this work.


Chapter 32 is a comprehensive, alphabetical index of classes, methods, and fields. Users can locate a particular class or interface and determine which package defines it, or a particular method or field and see which classes define it. The concise nature of this index, however, does have a drawback. Since no pagination is given, the user must either flip to the subject index to get the relevant pages, or flip through the reference section, keeping an eye on the headers . . . for the relevant package/class. Both are time consuming . . . The subject index is comprehensive but short on cross-references. This is particularly true of abbreviations which are used throughout the index. For example, information on the Abstract Windowing Toolkit is found under AWT, not 'abstract.' . . . An ordering key would also have been useful. For instance, KEY_ACTION is filed as 'key action' which naturally comes before 'keyboard,' and 'java.beans' comes before 'javac,' which comes before 'java.math.' In one case, the underscore acts as a space; in the other, the period is ignored.


McQuain’s contribution to the literature on language will be welcomed by those of us who wish to be careful with English, especially if we deal daily with those who don’t care. Its minor flaws (e.g., a term on the cover that promises to be discussed in the text and isn’t; an index item that is exactly 100 pages from where indicated) seem petty when one considers its breadth will reward the lay or professional reader in unexpected ways.


So, shockingly expensive as this book is (atypically for Verso, there is an index, albeit a rudimentary one, which may have bumped the price up), you really do need a copy.

Indexes censured


Throughout, there is a considerable number of grammatical and syntactical mistakes, and a remarkable number of errors over proper names. Egeria is often Etherea; Louie Everest is almost invariably called Louise; the London Library is confused with the British Library; I became almost convinced that Sri Lankan was the correct spelling; and I did spot one Virginia Steven and one Virginia Wolf. How old was Vanessa in 1897 or Leslie Stephen in 1904? Mrs Coates doesn’t know. She thinks that Trekkie Parsons (oh, my God on 24 July 1995) is still alive; one can only be glad that she’s not able to read what Mrs Coates says about her. Mrs Coates’s loathing for Leonard is so great that Virginia only appears in the index under her maiden name, unlike other married women. Owing to an omission therein, the Nicolsons appear to be part of the Morrell family; ‘Vita Morrell’ has a strange resonance. Stranger still is that the Australia Council (the equivalent of the Arts Council) should have assisted in the production of the book.


Given this range, one is left perplexed by the absence of the immensely inventive, if flawed, reprise of the Homeric original in Nikos Kazantzakis. That problematic giant does not even figure in the index.


If the ropey index to Taylor’s biography were better it would have under ‘Dickens’ entries like ‘T’s attempts to emulate’, ‘T’s comparison of himself with’, ‘T’s envy of’, and so on.


The present index is so inadequate that it should be improved or deleted. There are entries for the Nazi party, Shakespeare and Woody Allen, but not for ApoE, BRCA1, PGD or dozens of other highly germane words that are discussed in the text.


There is only very minimal cross-referencing between chapters, so much of the material is difficult to locate, a problem that is exacerbated by a virtually non-existent index.


This book . . . certainly does contain many facts; however, these facts are neither always readily accessible nor relevant to anesthesiology. For example, I tried to find information on the pediatric dose of ketorolac. It was not in the index under ‘Ketorolac,’ but could be found under ‘Pediatric patient, nonnarcotic analgesics’ and under ‘Analgesics, nonnarcotic, pediatric patients.’ Frankly, it would not have immediately occurred to me to look for ketorolac under either of these headings. Nicardipine is not mentioned in the index at all. There is a page of indications for double lumen intubation (which is not indexed), but no other information on double lumen tubes . . . Tables of estimation of newborn gestational age from physical signs (also not indexed) and normal cerebrospinal fluid values are other data that are of little use to most anesthesiologists. Although promiscuous data inclusion may add utility to a book like this, the exclusion of whole areas of anesthesia practice and poor indexing seriously diminish its worth.


Although an important letter of 1855 declares that ‘excepting Falstaff and Dogberry, I think Molière a greater humourist than Shakespeare’ and describes Tom Jones as ‘one of the most tedious books (to me) that I ever read in my life’, there are no entries for Fielding, Shakespeare, or Tom Jones in the index . . . It is good to have these letters in print, but Collins, who was so thorough and
meticulous in his work and who knew how important the little details were, deserves more care.


It takes a (mercifully) rare skill to make a biography of such a colourful and controversial figure as Aleister Crowley dull, but Roger Hutchinson possesses it. . . . As a serious work of biography this book fails on just about every count . . . there is a skimpy 'Index of Personalities', a mere two pages long.


In the back of the book are two indexes, one chronological, showing the data spans of each collection in bar graphs, and the other alphabetical, which includes not only collection level entries but also specific images of subjects mentioned in the collection narratives . . . . The alphabetical arrangement of the collection descriptions by collection name, rather than by the broad groups noted above, makes use of the index mandatory, and the index, while it includes over one thousand entries for names and subjects, is of limited usefulness. For example, there is only one entry under 'food' and none for 'restaurants,' surely subjects that must recur frequently in these collections, as indicated by several of the illustrations . . . .


There has never before been an edition so fully and learnedly annotated and so wisely and thoughtfully conceived. It is therefore a matter of serious regret that it lacks a general index to its 330 pages of text and over 400 pages (including the introductions) of densely packed editorial matter. This severely reduces the book's serviceability. The indexes of titles and first lines often fail to give alternative forms (the consequence of precisely that scrupulous inexactness which gives this edition its raison d'être and method): thus you will not find 'Timon' unless you look under 'Satyr', although the poem is best known as 'Timon' or 'Timon. A Satyr'. The running titles don't identify individual works, which compounds the difficulties of searching. Some carelessness which should not have been passed by the publisher include a number of cross-references to p 800, and the failure to include a number of poems in the explanatory notes.


The index is rudimentary and very incomplete; for example, preprints are mentioned several times on pp 79–80, but these pages do not appear under 'preprints' in the index. Automatic indexing could have done better! [Harsh words indeed.]


There are omissions, of course, but my main criticism is of the index, which is woefully inadequate.


Although the authors are knowledgeable, the material in the bulk of the book is so badly organized that it is almost useless. Ames and Maschner wish to organize their material thematically, but cannot rise to their own challenge . . . . Ames and Maschner clearly lost control of their word-processors shortly after starting this project . . . . Cross-referencing is appallingly inadequate, and sometimes just plain wrong, and you cannot solve that problem by turning to the index, for this, too, is hopelessly incomplete . . . . Pity the poor Swedish botanist Eric Hultén, who appears three times: in the index as Hult>n, in the text as Hultein and in the bibliography as Hultin. Ames and Maschner had laudable aims, and somewhere in the book is a great deal of interesting information; it is just very difficult to put it together. They have been badly let down by Thames and Hudson, who should never have permitted such well-informed authors to put their names to such a shabby project.


The text is of necessity limited and within the confines of space, clear and concise. But human rights rates no mention in the index—not nor apartheid.


It is a pity that Ronald Blythe has edited this book so ineptly. It is by no means always clear who 'I' is, the footnotes are poor and the index hopelessly inadequate.

**Indexes reviewed**


There is no index, but a first-rate list of references and appendices is included . . .


There is, alas, no index, though there is a bibliography . . .


There is no index.


Ironically, the book which emphasises the importance of cataloguing and indexing for aiding access, contains no index itself. However, the brevity of the book and its detailed contents listing ensures that this lack is little felt. [Not good enough.]


Such a large work surely deserves a back-of-the-book index. And a thumb index to home in on a particular language would have been immensely helpful.


Minor blemishes, like the absence of a title-index, should be put right in the next printing.


And you learn quickly that you’ll not find anything a second time unless you make notes, because, incomprehensibly, there is no index.


There is no index – so rechecking any of the ‘ideas’ is very hard – and no reading list, a shameful omission in an introductory volume.


I found this book fascinating and thought-provoking but regretted the absence of an index.

Odd, though, that such a fat book should lack an index. You could fall asleep before finding something specific. Oh, maybe that’s the point.


But even a pseudo-scientific book covering so much ground should have had an index.


If only it had an index.


Un index manque cruellement.


Each interview is prefaced with a short biographical note and the first three are each provided with a title summarising their main themes . . . Though highly general, this device should have been maintained throughout. The lack of an index is a much more serious omission. It is very likely that readers might wish to see what different figures have to say about the same issues, but without a detailed contents page or index, that can only be achieved by reading the whole in fairly short order – not something that many will wish to do.


The photographs in this book are all drawn from a single collection, covering a period from just before the First World War to the mid 1930s. They are arranged, in the first section of the book by area, and then alphabetically, street by street. To some extent this mitigates the lack of an index, but this book is packed with snippets of local history and biographical detail which it would be useful to explore in a systematic way.


On the other hand, the book needed an editor who could have suppressed such a gratuitous description of Johannes Kepler as ‘the weiner [sic] from Weil-der-Stadt’, and who could have insisted on an index.


This slim volume certainly whetted my appetite to explore Vanessa’s art far more widely and deeply than its scope allowed. I was therefore a little disappointed by the lack of an index, bibliography, or details of where I might view for myself those paintings that are in the public domain.

**Obiter dicta**


Under ‘character’ in the Index, a handful of admirable traits, including ‘animal-lover’ and ‘self-deprecation’, are listed; but these dwindle into insignificance beside the catalogue of defects: ‘anti-feminism, anti-Semitism, bitterness, childishness, deception, deviousness, disgust with the body, egotism, envy, exhibitionism, hysteria, jealousy, mawkishness, misogyny, narcissism, paranoia, selfishness, snobbery’ – and so on. Even ‘socialism’ is placed in heavily ironic quotation marks, despite the fact that Brooke was an active member of the Fabian Society.

**A balanced book**

I’ve been reading with pleasure the new biography of Lord ‘Derry’ Irvine, the lord chancellor. It’s by Dominic Egan, himself a lawyer. I asked Mr Egan if he thought the book was critical, but he assured me it was carefully researched and very fair.

I hope Lord Irvine agrees with him. Take, for instance, this extract from the index, under ‘Irvine, other references’: It reads: ‘aggressive manner, 82; and alcohol, 242; ambition, 27; arrogance, 46; boastfulness, 27; control, love of, 164; enemies, 81; failure, 15; hypocrisy, 150; inflexibility, 85; insecurity, 245; pomposity, 33; sensitivity to criticism, 155 . . . .

But you can tell this is a balanced book, because the list includes ‘generosity and kindness, 91.’

Simon Hoggart, Diary, The Guardian, 13 Nov 1999

**Hackneyed stunt**

I am fascinated that in her review of my book (11 December), Diana: The Life of a Troubled Princess, Julie Burchill resorted to a hackneyed stunt by pulling pejorative citations about Diana, Princess of Wales out of the index (‘bitterness of’, ‘immaturity of’, ‘instability of’, ‘interests lacked by’). Two can play this game, so let the record show that the index also includes the following entries, which evidently were uncongenial to Burchill’s tendentious thesis: ‘beauty of’, ‘charisma of’, ‘charity work of’, ‘compassion and empathy of’, ‘energy of’, ‘helpfulness of’, ‘humour of’, ‘intelligence of’. Burchill is, to put it mildly, a writer with an agenda (quite apart from a book of her own she’d like to keep aloof).

Sally Bedell Smith, letter to The Spectator, 15 Jan 2000

**Indexes and skippage**

There have been few biographies in the past half-century that have come to fewer than 600 pages . . . For an ordinary newspaper reviewer, for instance, it means that a biography should have a good index to help him skip perhaps half a thousand pages. Biography, especially governance biography, now has to be designed for skippage.


**Some writers (and indexers) never learn**

In Competition No. 2110 you were invited to provide a review of an imaginary book by a writer who, though he may have glanced at the blurbs, dedication or index, hasn’t read a word of the text . . . .

Ian Olson amused by nicely catching the tone of voice of one sort of reviewer: ‘The watercolor of Dowdeigh Hall on the cover is not, as she claims, in private hands (purchased by the Gulbenkian in 1998), poor Debra, Lady Dowdeigh is indexed as “Lady Debra Dowdeigh” (will they never learn?) and Danielle, Lord Dowdeigh’s fourth wife, transforms into “Daniella” throughout.”


[Oh, that sort of reviewer.]

**Mendacious index**

[John] Cornwell’s device is to make his book [Hitler’s Pope] argumentative rather than descriptive; to turn it, in parts, into a polemic. [Edmund] Morris goes very much further [in Dutch, his memoir of Ronald Reagan]. He invents a series of fictional characters who interact with Reagan and comment on him for the years of his life when Morris was not there. It is a sublimey irritating and deceptive device, mendaciously backed up with reference notes to invented diaries and index entries for non-existent people.


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Then as now
Carlyle . . . full of outpourings of self-pity for his lonely, dyspeptic lot, fighting his way through mountains of ‘rubbish’ – German books on Frederick [the Great] with their unsubstantiated narratives and lack of proper indexes.


A common pastime
Norman Lamont’s memoirs are not enjoying the same success [as Ann Widdecombe’s collected speeches]. Sales at Politico’s [Bookshop] last week did not reach double figures. This shortfall may be partly due to a common pastime among the shop’s Westminster and Millbank clientele: selective browsing. ‘They pick up a book,’ staff report, ‘look for their name in the index, read the relevant pages and then put it down again.’

The Guardian, 6 Nov. 1999

Bastards brought to book?
I ask him whether he knows how he comes across in [John] Major’s astonishingly frank forthcoming memoir. Will we find him in the index under B for ‘Bastards’? ’I hadn’t thought about it until now.’ He pauses, suddenly thoughtful. ‘Is it astonishingly frank?’

Ginny Dougary, interview with Michael Portillo, The Times, 9 Sept. 1999

Amundsen the animal-lover
As Caroline Alexander notes in her essay ‘The Race to the Bottom’ (Oct. 31), Roland Huntford’s book The Last Place on Earth paints sharply contrasting portraits of the Antarctic explorers Roald Amundsen and Robert Falcon Scott – even in its index . . .

Huntford . . . does not allow Scott a single virtue. Both expeditions, for example, sacrificed their animals – the killing of worn-out sled dogs to feed the others was, from the start, a key element of Amundsen’s plan – yet Amundsen actually receives the index entry ‘animals, love of . . .’


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Contributions of review extracts welcomed by the editor of this section, Christine Shuttleworth (please see inside front cover for further details). Closing dates for the next two issues: 30 June and 30 November 2000.

Society of Indexers Occasional Papers on Indexing

1. Indexing biographies and other stories of human lives, Hazel K. Bell (2nd edn, 1998)
   65 pp., £12.00 (UK), £13.00 (Europe), £14.50/ US$29.00 (rest of world)
   ‘A joy to read and enjoyable to use . . . both invaluable and delightful’, ASI Newsletter

2. Indexing legal materials, Elizabeth M. Moys, Anne P. Coles, Moira Greenhalgh, Ben Wynne (1993)
   86 pp., £10.50 (UK), £11.50 (Europe), £13.00/ US$26.00 (rest of world)
   ‘Remarkable value . . . a surprising amount of information in its pages’, Catalogue and Index

3. Indexing the medical and biological sciences, Doreen Blake, Michèle Clarke, Anne McCarthy, June Morrison, with advice from Dr John Gibson (1995)
   70 pp., £13.00 (UK), £14.00 (Europe), £15.50/US$31.00 (rest of world)
   ‘I recommend this book both to the experienced medical indexer . . . and to the generalist’, IASCI/SCAD Bulletin

   56 pp., £13.00 (UK), £14.00 (Europe), £15.50/ US$31.00 (rest of world)
   A practical, comprehensive and interesting guide, by the author of the index to the Strand Magazine.

5. Indexing children’s books, K. G. B. Bakewell and Paula L. Williams, with contributions from Elizabeth Wallis and Valerie A. Elliston (due summer 2000)

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