

Visiting the BBC Scotland archives

In this edited version of a piece first published on the SI website Bechaela Walker describes meeting Jennifer Wilson and hearing about the archiving system she outlines in her article on page 55.

The SI Scottish Group and eight members from the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP) met at BBC Scotland at Pacific Quay, Glasgow, on 2 March 2016 to learn about the broadcaster's digital and physical tape archives. We were met by Jennifer Wilson, who started at BBC Scotland as a bi-media librarian almost 20 years ago, and is now their Data and Taxonomy Manager.

We walked through the terraces and platforms of the building's bright atrium to our meeting room. Jennifer explained that when the broadcasters moved to this custom-built headquarter in 2007, a new system, 'Fabric', designed by Ardendo, was launched to replace the 40-year-old card catalogue system, Infax. Seven years later, Infax was still in use as many cataloguers and users found Fabric difficult to use.

When Jennifer and her team started work on improving the digital archive, they were faced with the challenge of matching fields from three databases that would cover radio and TV in every genre. Most people now use free text searches, scrolling through the results until they find what they want. For example, features such as a 'did you mean' dialogue boxes prompt users to consider other terms to get more accurate results. Many indexers pointed out that free text searches are an inferior way of looking for information, but Jennifer said that despite database training sessions, users continued to search in this way. This really gave me something to reflect on, coming from a generation that can hardly remember searching for information any other way, certainly on web-based forums. Jennifer also had to replace the field 'taxonomy' with 'tags' as less than 0.1 per cent of users used the former, unfamiliar term when cataloguing or searching for material.

The archive is now used by over 780 people, including

librarians ('media managers'), directors, and journalists, and is seen as the heart of the production process. In July 2016 it is due to go completely file-based, containing footage made up from transmission, and requests for footage from 2007 onwards. There is more of a focus on storing files produced by the BBC, as the rights for those made by independent companies are not retained by the corporation. Production teams can search for and access all rushes and decide which ones to keep and can then ask the library to store certain shots. These shots can then be re-used in other productions; in fact re-use of footage is the main remit of the archive these days. Users can now also do a durational search, which is especially useful for radio programmers looking for, say, a two-minute filler before the news.

In response to a question about security and longevity, Jennifer explained that network commissions are stored in London as well as in Scotland. Any documents no longer required by the BBC tend to go to the British Film Institute (BFI) or the National Library. There are strict protocols for deleting files. Initially, all footage was stored on two separate servers, as well as physically on tape. Now, it is just stored on two servers. There are, however, physical archives, including motion picture film; one- and two-inch videotape; Betamax tapes; DigiBeta tapes; and XD cam discs. The Betamax tapes are currently being digitized and the one- and two-inch tapes have already been converted. Film is the most stable physical format so there's not such a rush to convert it, but Jennifer is currently trying to get funding through the Film Preservation Project, so that people can more easily access these archives.

I'm a new student indexer and the group was very welcoming, with people from both SfEP and SI keen to share their knowledge and experience, which was brilliant. I'd really recommend all indexers anywhere to take advantage of this sort of opportunity to meet their fellows in the editing and indexing world and in the publishing world generally. It puts things into a new perspective.

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 readers have sent in. Our reproduction of comments is not a stamp of approval from The Indexer upon the reviewer's assessment of an index. Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections: Indexes praised; Indexes censured; Indexes omitted; Obiter dicta.

Indexes praised

Facet Publishing: *Preserving our heritage: perspectives from antiquity to the digital age*, ed. by Michele Valerie Cloonan (2015, 702 pp, £69.95). Rev. by Elizabeth Melrose, *CILIP Update*, December/January 2015/16.

There is an author and title index and a welcome subject index.

Louisiana State University Press: *A Confederacy of Dunces*

cookbook: recipes from Ignatius J. Reilly's New Orleans, by Cynthia Lejeune Nobles (2015, 240 pp, £15.83). Rev. by John Williams, *New York Times*, 18 December 2016.

The endless appetite of the Falstaffian protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly inspires dozens of recipes here, from Miss Trixie's Orange-and-Bourbon-Glazed Ham to the Bourbon Street Messy Dog, which involves French bread and chicken gravy. The book's index is a culinary exploration in itself. A sampling of its entries: 'alligator hunting,' 'bacon grease,' 'hog jowls,' 'Wonder Bread.' [*Index of subjects by ASI member Scott Smiley, index of recipes by the author. Elliot Linzer commented on IDL (Indexers' Discussion List): 'Mentions of indexes [are] rare in the New York Times Book Review, and in other media sources of book reviews. One of the reasons for this is that reviewers often get copies of bound galleys to review, not actual copies of the final book, minus the index (and some other stuff, such as covers).*']

Penguin: *The sense of style: the thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century*, by Steven Pinker (2014, 359 pp, £22.16). Rev. by Geoff Hart, *Corrigo: the newsletter of the STC Technical Editing SIG*, 1 March 2016, <http://stc-techedit.org/corrigo/book-review-the-sense-of-style/#more-729>

If you're looking for a list of stylistic prescriptions and proscriptions, as in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, this isn't the book for you, despite a decent index. But if you're in search of new ways to think about why -scriptions arise, Pinker's got you covered.

Pinter & Martin: *Dynamic positions in birth: a fresh look at how women's bodies work in labour*, by Margaret Jowitt (2014, 252 pp, £8.99). Rev. by Mary Curtin, *British Journal of Midwifery*, October 2015, 23(10).

The book has a comprehensive reference section and index for the reader to refer to when needed and return to as often as required.

QED: *My little book of big trucks*, compiled by Honor Head (2015, 64 pp, £7.99). Rev. by Bev Archer, *Carousel*, 61, Autumn 2015.

There is interest and information on every numbered page but what I really like is the inclusion of a contents page and an index.

Indexes censured

Atlantic Books: *Fracture: life and culture in the West 1918–1938*, by Philipp Blom (2015, 482 pp, £25). Rev. by Alex Danchev, *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 February 2016.

There are occasional lapses. ... It may be that the author has been ill-served by his publishers. Time and again in these pages, the editing and proofreading are lacking. The index is inadequate to the teeming population of the text. The notes are exiguous. The bibliography is a testament to the polyglot author, but it is remarkably unhelpful to the monoglot majority, surely a large proportion of the target audience...

Elsevier: *Elements of petroleum geology*, ed. by R. C. Selley and A. A. Sonneberg (3rd ed., 2015, 527 pp, £69.99). Rev. by John Midgley, *Geoscientist*, 26(1), February 2016.

The version of the book I received for review was the electronic edition. While not having the familiarity of a print edition for a quick flip through, it does have the advantage that many of the references can be accessed via the internet by a quick flick on the hotlink. The downside is 'link rot' – many are now defunct! Given

that the references are hyperlinked, I expected the index to have the same ability and link to online text; alas it does not – another opportunity missed to exploit the potential advantages of eBooks.

[This] has been the book I recommend most often This is an expensive book, especially for students. If one is considering a purchase, think carefully about which format, print or electronic, best fits your needs.

Heritage of London Trust: *Parish churches of Greater London: a guide*, by Michael Hodges (2015, 446 pp, £25 + \$4.40 p & p). Rev. by Harry Mount, *The Spectator*, 16 January 2016.

This is a chaotic ragbag of a book. The index is done by church name, not by location. So there are 65 St Mary's churches listed together – not much use if you can't remember the name of the church you're looking for.

Oxford University Press: *1001 words: an AZ of effective vocabulary*, by M. H. Monser (2014, 166 pp, £7.99). Rev. by Caroline Petherick, *Editing Matters*, January/February 2016.

You've picked your subject, and are instructed to turn to a page at the back of the book to find it within the subject list ... er, the back of the book? To me this positioning – presumably generated by the inappropriate labelling of the subject list as an index – is another indication of the muddled thinking that makes this book so difficult to use.

Next, there's the problem of finding the correct subject within said index, because at first glance the pages appear to be unnumbered. On closer inspection, the numbers turn out to be in the gutter. Rather discouraging.

Having found your subject index, you peruse the list of words – under each subject heading there are up to 500 words, on the basis that they're relevant to said subject. Good!

But they're listed in alphabetical order – fine if you knew what word you wanted, but not helpful when, as in this scenario, you don't. Here's a short excerpt from the Interviews subject list: *interest, interpersonal, leadership, modest, multi-purpose, panache, participate*. I've been using reference books for my editing work since 1993 but, when trying to find a word in this list to fit a concept I have in mind, I find myself swiftly outpaced by the incongruence of ideas generated by the alphabetical listings. I'd be interested to hear if anyone, whatever the level of their expertise in the use of English, has managed to penetrate effectively the thickets of this ill-considered verbiage to find the treasures relevant to them within the main listing. [*It sounds as though what is needed is a thesaurus.*]

University Press of Kansas: *Presidents and the American environment*, by Otis L. Graham Jr (2015, 411 pp, \$39.95). Rev. by Christine Keiner, *H-Net Reviews*, February, 2016, www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=45419.

Of much greater concern is the skimpy index, which omits many significant people and policies addressed in the book, a surprising oversight given the author's frequent mentions of looking up entries like 'public lands,' 'natural resources,' 'conservation,' 'wildlife,' 'national forests,' 'national parks,' 'pollution,' and 'environment' in the indices [*sic*] of presidential papers and biographies (see, e.g., pp. 5, 33, 51–52, 165, 174–175, 181, 244, and 298). Perhaps the press's production team assumed they could save money on the grounds that everyone now reads keyword-searchable digital books, but even if that were true, a detailed index remains a valuable tool for readers and researchers, and a handy sketch of the author's priorities.

Indexes omitted

Atlantic: *The maverick mountaineer: the remarkable life of George Ingle Finch: climber, scientist, inventor*, by Robert Wainwright (2015, 416 pp, £17.99). Rev. by Janette Wolf, *The Independent*, 2 January 2016.

The book might have benefited from an index but as a study of a man whose greatness we would do well to remember and applaud, it sparkles.

Jonathan Cape: *West of Eden*, by Jean Stein (2016, 368 pp, £20). Rev. by Nicky Haslam, *The Oldie*, April 2016.

The book is written in the form of interviews with descendants, employees and friends who knew or remembered the ... inhabitants [of five houses in Hollywood]. Some of [the author's] interviewees are well-known (but mostly dead); others are more obscure and often more verbose. These sources tend to overlap in each segment; the switching between past and present tenses and the lack of an index make it difficult for the reader to figure who was where, why or when.

Goose Lane Editions: *Canadian Pacific: the golden age of travel*, by Barry Lane (2–15, 200 pp, £31). Rev. by Valerie Knowles, *Literary Review of Canada* 24, no. 1, January/February 2016.

Not least, by allowing readers to immerse themselves in an evocative age that did so much to forge modern-day Canada, Lane and his publisher have produced a volume that will delight and entertain. That is accomplishment enough for any book. *Canadian Pacific* does not have an index, but it does provide suggestions for further reading. [*So that's all right then.*]

Northwestern University Press: *Machiavelli in the making*, by Claude Lefort, trans. Michael Smith (2012, 512 pp, \$34.95). Rev. by Glen Newey, *London Review of Books*, 21 January 2016.

Machiavelli in the Making is a translation of Claude Lefort's *Le Travail de l'oeuvre Machiavel*, or 'Machiavelli: The Work of the Work', from 1972. The book didn't come out in English until 2012, but it still isn't very reader-friendly: it has no introduction (Michael Smith adds a brief translator's note), sketchy endnotes and no index.

Seven Stories Press/Walker Books: *Drawn from the archive: hidden histories of illustration*, by Sarah Lawrance (2015, 128 pp, £9.98). Rev. by Andrea Immel, *Children's Book History Society*, 113, December 2015.

The pictures have been chosen very well indeed and the designer Sarah Pannasch has done a lovely job of placing them in the text. My only quibble is that the book lacks an index. Strictly speaking, it isn't necessary, but it is a shame that all the useful information packed into the entries can't be retrieved, making it less useful for researchers than it could be.

Sussex County Magazine: rev. by Anthony Brook, 'Sussex, geology and the county magazine', *Brighton & Hove Geological Society Newsletter*, issue 75, June 2004.

This magazine [*Sussex County Magazine*] has one grave defect: there is no index. There is no annual index, which is not really surprising, considering the sort of magazine it was; and there is no complete and comprehensive cumulative index covering *all* the material published in this defunct periodical. That creates a real

problem, which can only be overcome to the extremely tedious chore of checking every plate of every issue (all 367 of them) for any signs of a particular topic – in this case, geology and the formation of the Sussex landscape. Patiently trawling through every issue, and inspection of County Notes and Letters to the Editor as well as articles, I was able to slowly amass 73 published pieces in this general area as shown in the accompanying table, where they are subdivided into Geologists (21), Fossils (12) and Landscape (40).

Obiter dicta

Maclehose Press: *Parfums: a catalogue of remembered smells*, by Philippe Claudel (2014, 176 pp, £12.08). Rev. by Nathalie Atkinson, *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 4 February 2016.

It's fitting then that in the new English translation [by Euan Cameron] of French novelist Philippe Claudel's acclaimed *Parfums: A Catalogue of Remembered Smells*, the entry 'le sexe féminin' comes between entries on soap and sewage. This order of things makes perfect sense since in perfumery, sexy is earthy – it's dirt under fingernails. [*NB: these entries are actually the titles of sections in the book, rather than index entries.*]

Parish life

The massive three-volume history of the parish of Moyne/Templetuohy, Co. Tipperary, *A Life of its Own* [Moyne/Templetuohy History Group, 2001, 1316 pp, €5, available from moytem@gmail.com] now has a comprehensive index compiled by [SI member] Julitta Clancy. Again attractively produced, the hardback index volume is in the same format and style as the original large three volumes, and has the area's bog maps of the early nineteenth century as endpapers.

George Cunningham (source unavailable)

Selective reader

Times have indeed changed since I was a street-cricket-playing-tomboy-who-didn't-read. In 2012 I was an ambassador for the National Year of Reading. That's right. Me, Anita Heiss – who managed to get through some subjects in her undergraduate degree by only reading indexes of books – was asked to spend twelve months promoting the love of reading.

Heiss, Anita, 'Not all writers began as readers', in *The Simple Act of Reading* (ed. by Debra Adelaide, Vintage Books, Australia, 2015).

Maternal devotion

I put the finishing touches to a thesis of 1,200 pages, and struggled to compress its argument into the statutory 150 words of the abstract. My diary entry for 30 May [1957] reads: 'Terrible difficulty in writing abstract, and some mental agony in consequence.' ... The book of the thesis which followed in 1967, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, ... cost my mother almost more than me, since she typed the whole thing and, later, for want of anything better to do, indexed it.

Patrick Collinson, *The History of a History Man* (Boydell Press, 2011)

A youthful indexer

To add to the list [of recent publications by eminent poets], my dear madam, you will soon see a work of mine in print. Do not be fright-

ened! it is only the index to the thirteenth volume of the *Christian Observer*, which I have had the honour of composing. Index-making, though the lowest, is not the most useless round in the ladder of literature; and I pride myself upon being able to say that there are many readers of the *Christian Observer* who could do without Walter Scott's works, but not without those of, my dear Madam, your affectionate friend, THOMAS B. MACAULAY.

Letter of January 1815 from Thomas Babington Macaulay (aged 14) to Mrs Hannah More (aged 70), in *The gentlest art: a choice of letters by entertaining hands* (1907), ed. by E. V. Lucas

[It was the same precocious brat who, at the age of four, replied to a lady who asked him how he was feeling after having hot coffee spilled on his legs: 'Thank you, madam, the agony is abated.']

Warm thanks to the contributors to this section:

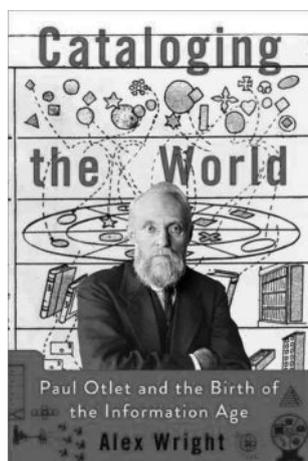
Jane Angus, Ballater
Christine Boylan, Deal, Kent
Mary Coe, Killarney Heights, NSW
David Crystal, Holyhead
Moyra Forrest, Edinburgh
Jill Halliday, Pulham St Mary
Jennifer Harding, Milton Keynes
Helen Litton, Dublin
Ingrid Lock, Brighton
Andrew Lopez, New London, CT
Christopher Pipe, Cromer
Angela Wingfield, Toronto

Contributions of review extracts welcomed by the editor of this section, Christine Shuttleworth (please see inside front cover for further details).

Book reviews

Cataloging the world. Alex Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 360 pp. ISBN 978-0199-93141-5 (hbk), £16.99/\$27.95; ISBN 978-1511-38396-7 (mp3 CD), \$9.99; ASIN B00JDLCZ28 (e-book), \$9.99/£13.63

Alex Wright is a Brooklyn-based writer and researcher, with two books to his name. *Glut*, his first book, tells the story of how we dealt with information through the ages. *Cataloging the World*, his second one, is an intellectual biography of Paul Otlet (1868–1944), a Belgian librarian, author, visionary, internationalist and peace activist. Otlet wrote about networked computers, 50 years before the Internet was even in its infancy.



Otlet's grand vision involved a universal bibliography that would record every document ever produced, and a universal classification system that would index every piece of information in that bibliography. Together with

Henri La Fontaine he started to give form to this dream by establishing the Universal Bibliographic Repertory and developing his Universal Decimal Classification (derived from, but much more detailed than, Dewey's Decimal Classification). This index of published works ultimately grew to 15 million entries on index cards, filed in a vast grid of wooden cabinets.

The Palais Mondial, later called the Mundaneum, housed this collection and would serve as the intellectual nerve centre of a post-national world order, connecting governments, bookstores and other institutions in a utopian collaborative network. When new media, such as microfilm, became available, Otlet was eager to incorporate them in this vision as well. The Mundaneum would eventually have a place in the World City, a city that would radiate knowledge to the rest of the world, and construct peace and universal cooperation.

The realization of Otlet's vision was eventually undermined

by war, political turmoil and the stock market crash. He died in obscurity in 1944, having seen his major project, the Mundaneum, boarded up after losing all its funding. Much, though not all, of the collections were destroyed by the Nazis in 1940.

The book gives tantalizingly few glimpses into Otlet's private life. What information there is, is mostly about his youth and education. He married twice; from his first marriage he had two sons, one of whom died in the Battle of the Yser in the First World War. By all accounts his second marriage was a happy one.

Alex Wright's style is occasionally a bit rambling, but he does a great job of providing enough historical and political context to grasp the importance of Paul Otlet. What stands out are the surprising connections Wright makes between Otlet and contemporary thinkers and doers. This means there is never a dull moment as he takes you on this rollercoaster ride among librarians, sociologists, pacifists, authors, inventors and artists. The book ends with the cooperation between Google and the reconstituted Mundaneum, now situated in Mons, in trying to safeguard Otlet's legacy.

It was well worth listening to the audio book version, read by John Lee. Lee is a narrator with a pleasant voice, a good pace and an excellent grasp of French and German. Nothing is more off-putting than a narrator who pronounces foreign names and terms in incomprehensible ways. The Kindle edition, which I had on hand as well, has an extensive linked index and linked notes. Alas they are not notes that show up in a separate window when you touch the note's indicator, and which save you the bother of going back and forth between text and notes at the end of the book.

Pierke Bosschieter, freelance indexer,
Stitswerd, the Netherlands

Indexing it all: the subject in the age of documentation, information, and data. Ronald E. Day. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014. xiv, 170 pp. ISBN 978-0262028219.

In *Indexing it all*, Ronald E. Day draws from the work of French documentalist Suzanne Briet to explain the transformation, driven by modern political economies, of reader into 'user', of self into 'psychological or experiential index', and of indexes from explicit, external pointers into implicit, structural-communicative cues.