

understand the distribution of responsibility and therefore what information is likely to be published at various levels.

Thereafter in successive chapters the range of publications is described, with attention first to parliamentary publications, then judicial, followed by those of the various government departments and authorities. The latter are subdivided by subject rather than by department or level. As admitted by the editor, no effort has been made "to list every single document" but rather to give an idea of the range and scope of publications available. The level and style of treatment of the various sections are uneven and there is some degree of overlap. Few people would want, as this reviewer did, to read steadily through it; the density of information is overwhelming. The more sensible way would be to read (using the index) those parts relevant to the subject of interest or to documents being sought. Nevertheless there is in these chapters much information essential to the understanding of what can or cannot be found in the various classes of publication. Examples that come to mind are the discussion of how to track down the history of a bill together with the stumbling blocks in the way of the researcher, and the process by which law reports have evolved and are maintained.

There is, however, a publication that can be used to accompany and supplement this survey. Itself an example of a semi-official publication and the problems of bibliographic description, it is *Government Publications of Australia: A List of Lists*, 2d ed., compiled by the Sub-Committee on Government Publications of the Victorian Regional Committee of the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographic Services (Melbourne: Library Council of Victoria, 1979, 47p., A\$4.50, ISBN 0-909962-26-X). Libraries would be well advised to have both texts available.

Librarians who are not necessarily interested in Australia will be interested in the last three chapters, which describe in some detail the production and distribution of documents, their bibliographical control (or lack of it), and access through libraries and their catalogs. These chapters discuss frankly many problems only too well known

to librarians anywhere—inadequate government coordination, historical gaps in the record, and the difficulty of dovetailing bibliographic projects.

Despite some reservations arising from the chosen format, there is no doubt that this book must be in every library serving users with an interest in Australia. Library schools and document collections will also benefit from the discussions of governments as publishers and the problems of access to official information. For those who need to acquire materials in specific subjects it can also help by suggesting possible leads to be followed up in more strictly bibliographical guides. Borchardt is to be congratulated on a further contribution to Australian bibliography.—*Murray S. Martin, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.*

Lancaster, F. Wilfrid. *Information Retrieval Systems: Characteristics, Testing and Evaluation*. 2d ed. Information Sciences Series. New York: Wiley, 1979. 381p. \$19.95. LC 78-11078. ISBN 0-471-04663-6.

Van Rijsbergen, C. J. *Information Retrieval*. 2d ed. London, Boston: Butterworths, 1979. 208p. \$32.50. LC 78-40725. ISBN 0-408-70929-4. (Available from: Butterworths, 10 Tower Office Park, Woburn, MA 01801.)

When two textbooks on information retrieval are published at about the same time, each a second edition, each intended mainly or in part for the use in instruction of college- or graduate-level students of library and information science, it is tempting to compare them for further significant similarities. In this case—with one regrettable exception—there are none to be found. While addressing a common topic, these two books could hardly be more dissimilar. They are not in competition; each serves a different purpose for a different type of audience.

The regrettable similarity between these books is that both of them, through failure to discuss or identify alternatives, equate information retrieval to subject searching. A student who depends entirely on either will learn little or nothing about the unique aspects, the importance, or even the existence of information retrieval based on non-subject approaches such as names, titles,

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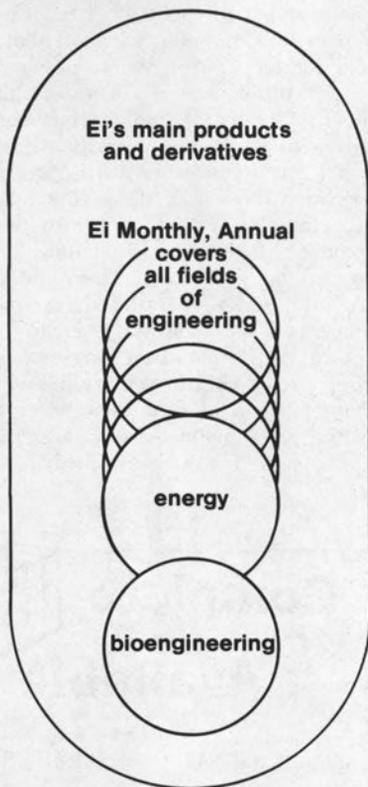
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series designators, and citations. These books are indeed valuable, but especially so if the reader is aware of their restricted construction of the topic.

Van Rijsbergen's *Information Retrieval* is a revision, augmented rather than rewritten, of the original 1975 version. The author is a member of the staff of the Cambridge University Computer Science Laboratory. It is a tightly written work, never straying beyond the bounds of a focus established in the first few paragraphs. It is concerned only with automatic information retrieval. It is not much concerned with operational information retrieval systems, but rather with experimental systems and with the development of theoretical foundations for system design and evaluation. The eight chapters are intended to parallel the sequence of concerns of a person who plans to design an automatic information retrieval system. After a compact introductory discussion, the chapters deal, in turn, with automatic text analysis, automatic classification, file structures, search strategies, probabilistic re-

trieval (a new chapter, and the major change in the new edition), evaluation of retrieval effectiveness, and future prospects and research needs.

The treatment throughout is abstract and mathematical, appropriate for system designers and computer science students, but well beyond the mathematical preparation of most library science students, at least in the U.S. Readers with sufficient time and determination can use publications cited in the book to acquire the requisite mathematical skills. The book provides very few problems that are worked out to illustrate the applications of derived formulations.

Van Rijsbergen is meticulous about tracing and acknowledging the priority of ideas and methods used in his discussions. He is also very candid, reminding readers repeatedly that the development and evaluation of information retrieval systems depend on measurements of relevance, a parameter which, in practice, can only be estimated from samplings and which is specific to the particular query used in the sampling.

Lancaster's *Information Retrieval Systems* takes a very different approach to the subject. Lancaster is a professor of library science at the University of Illinois. The first edition of the book was published in 1968. The revised edition is heavily rewritten and greatly expanded. The scope is broad, encompassing fundamentals, descriptions of actual systems, test and evaluation methods, historical material, and future projection. The exposition is emphatically *unmathematical*; aside from defining and illustrating a few ratios such as recall and precision, it contains nothing resembling a formula or a quantitative derivation. Since it makes no mathematical demands on readers, the book can be understood easily by students of all kinds. This qualitative approach produces a book that is, as the author intends, a useful introductory survey of the field. It is not a tool for the system designer or researcher.

The first edition contained sixteen chapters; in revision, this has grown to twenty-five chapters, three appendixes, and a quadrupled list of citations. The organization of these numerous chapters and the material in them is sometimes confusing. For example, there are two widely separated chapters that discuss the needs of us-

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ers of information retrieval systems. The chapters are uneven in length and scholarly style. Nevertheless, there is an abundance of fine exposition, particularly in the several chapters that explain what happens in automated information retrieval systems and how such systems can be evaluated.

Both the Lancaster book and the Van Rijsbergen book contain helpful indexes. Each has a bibliography of more than 300 citations; their overlap is less than 10 percent, attesting to the great differences in the texts.—Ben-Ami Lipetz, *State University of New York at Albany*.

Knight, G. Norman. *Indexing, The Art of: A Guide to the Indexing of Books and Periodicals*. London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1979. 218p. \$21. LC 78-70882. ISBN 0-04-029002-6. (Available from: Allen & Unwin, Inc., 9 Winchester Terr., Winchester, MA 01890.)

Although commissioned long before publication of the definitive American work on indexing (*Indexing Concepts and Methods* by Harold Borko and Charles L. Bernier, 40:284-85), this smaller volume representing the British counterpart appeared one year later. The delay was due, probably, to the declining health of the author, who died in 1978 at the age of eighty-six, shortly after the text of the book had been sent to the printer. The authors of the two volumes certainly must be considered authorities on indexing: coauthor Charles Bernier is past president of the American Society of Indexers, while G. Norman Knight is the late president of the Society of Indexers (Great Britain) and was one of its founders.

The similarity between the two works goes further: while the American edition declares boldly on page ix "designed as a textbook," it is only on page 102 that Knight reveals his basic intent in a modest aside: "It is in a textbook (such as the present author immodestly trusts that *Indexing, The Art of* may become) that numbered paragraphs are most commonly used." The author, however, does not use numbered paragraphs.

While the American volume covers a broader field in more clinical depth, the British volume concentrates on the basic fundamentals, the humanistic side of the

art. In noting that an objection might be made to the elementary nature of his volume, the author states in his preface that "this has been so arranged deliberately, because any indexer who observes all the elementary principles will not go far wrong, while sometimes advanced indexers are apt to make their own rules." Thus the work confines itself to the many aspects of indexing as accomplished by humans as an art form, and leaves others to tell of computers, citation indexes, KWIC, KWOC, PRECIS, concordances, and the many special indexes—thematic for music, ring for *Chemical Abstracts*, etc. In short, it is a meditatively sage old gentleman's reasoned presentation of his art. It provides a leisurely, warm, reassuring introduction to an art form which only of late has begun to receive the notice and attention it so richly deserves.

The author's last chapter, "Humour in Indexing," should appeal primarily to those few Americans who still have vestiges of a British sense of "humour." It seems, however, unfortunate that what to this reviewer was the most humorous textual example is not listed in the index under this heading. In describing the use of *passim* to indicate scattered references throughout an indicated range of pages of text, the author tells of the entry "Birds, 1-457 *passim*" being inserted by an indexer's young daughter in the proof stage of an index for an ornithological book that consisted of 457 pages! As Knight noted: "It then caused so much amusement that the publisher decided to retain it in one or two subsequent editions" (p.104).

The six appendixes (the spelling based on the parallel to the correct literary plural of index as established by Shakespeare, and transmitted by Knight) provide information about the British, American, Australian, and Canadian societies of indexers, as well as the Wheatley Medal and the Carey Award. The index, which was prepared with the assistance of Anthony Raven and completed by him after the author's death, is almost perfect typographically and the contents reflect what a model British index would be, be it somewhat more elaborately and artfully contrived than its American counterpart. One and one-half pages of the total fourteen