

Book Index Reviews

SIR: Book reviews rarely contain a reference to the index. Of the 137 books considered in Vol. 150 (January–June 1987) of the *Journal*, 9 indexes received some comment. Chick (p. 419), Jacoby (p. 421) and Smith (p. 134) used such expressions as “well-indexed”, “comprehensive” and “excellent”. Greer (p. 280) noted that “the omission of an index is a disadvantage”, Kerr’s “minor reservations relate(d) to the lack of an index” (p. 293), Rachman (p. 420) commented that “as there is no author index it was necessary to make a count”, and Yach (p. 890) stated that “the index is somewhat rudimentary”. Mayou (p. 573) “had to work hard turning from chapter to chapter and making the maximum use of

the index”. Wilkinson (p. 281), reviewing *Behaviour Therapy in Primary Care: A Practical Guide*, asks if “it is significant that the index contains no reference to illness, mental disorder, psychiatrist or psychiatry?”

With regard to the other 128 books, presumably some have adequate indexes, and some not. Is this information not worth recording by reviewers, especially if the book might be used for reference purposes?

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The report of the Superintendent of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum reveals an almost incredible condition of things. “The sanitary state of the institution is deplorable. The waterclosets throughout are in a sad state. In the North (male) House there are in one group of wards no waterclosets whatever that are accessible for day use, and the only accommodation for 120 men is one earth chair.” Under such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that out of an average population of 1076 as many as 117 were under hospital treatment for diarrhoea and dysentery during the year, or to find that these diseases caused twenty-two deaths in the same period; while for

the past ten years they have caused an average of twenty-six deaths annually. “Erysipelas is rarely absent from the house, and in some years has caused a considerable number of deaths.” This state of things demands remedy, and the newly appointed superintendent deserves every support in his attempt to put matters on a satisfactory footing. The percentage of deaths on the daily average numbers was 14.8, and that of recoveries on admission was 30.

Reference

The Lancet, 31 December 1887, 1341.