

Book indexes in France

Medieval specimens and modern practices

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Subject indexes are believed to have been invented in France in the 13th century, yet many modern French books lack such indexes. A two-pronged research project conducted in France in July 1999 aimed to examine manuscripts of the earliest indexes in libraries throughout the country and interview book publishers to determine their indexing policies. Manuscript book indexes produced in France, primarily in the Latin language and in the domain of religion, are works of extraordinary beauty, with precise locators and many design features that help to orientate the reader. This paper analyses the structure and format of these indexes with respect to contemporary practice. Where modern French books contain indexes, they are generally compiled by authors, who are not trained in book indexing by publishers. Few book publishing contracts mention indexes, and there is no professional society devoted to book indexing in France.

Context of the research

In the course of documenting a previous paper on the history of indexes (Weinberg, 1999b), which was based on research at the Vatican Library, I encountered the claim that subject indexes were invented in France (Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 11). This struck me as ironic because so many modern French books lack indexes. At my 1992 book indexing seminar, librarian Zachary M. Baker asked me the reason for this; although aware of the phenomenon, I was at a loss to explain it.

In the fall of 1998 I designed a two-pronged research project to (1) examine the earliest indexes in France and analyse them structurally, and (2) interview French publishers to learn their policies on indexing. Grant funding was received for a two-week trip to France; the research was undertaken in the first half of July 1999.

Literature review

Publications on the history of indexing are cited in Weinberg (1999b), which also notes the scatter of the literature on this subject: descriptions of early indexes are often found in theological journals, since the indexes provide access to religious texts. I assumed, however, that modern book indexing policies and practices in France would be described in the literature of library and information science.

Wellisch's bibliographies of indexing and abstracting (1980, 1984) have no entries for France under 'Book indexes'. The later bibliography includes a reference (entry 2760) to a manual of indexing published by the library of a French university, but the entry lacks an annotation, rendering it impossible to determine whether book indexing is dealt with; published reviews of this manual could not be located through standard indexes. Subsequent searching in the online catalogue of the library school in Lyons revealed that the author, Noë Richter, has published other books

dealing with indexing languages, and so the manual probably focuses on serial indexes.

For the period subsequent to Wellisch's bibliographies, machine-readable indexes are available. A search on the electronic version of *Library Literature*, covering the years 1984 to 1998, using the keyword *index** (truncated to match morphological variants, such as *indexes* and *indexing*) in combination with *France OR French*, revealed no literature on book indexes, although 28 articles on journal/database indexing were retrieved. (An interesting false drop – 'Indexing price trends of French academic books in the humanities and social sciences', *College & Research Libraries*, Jan. 1994 – demonstrated that even in the literature of our field, *indexing* can be a homograph.)

A search of the same keywords in *Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA)*, with coverage going back to 1969, yielded 644 hits. (LISA is published in England and covers more European journals than the American *Library Literature*, but no more than the three French journals indexed by *Library Literature*.) Since the 644 hits from LISA were derived from several fields of the document records, and hence were likely to include many false drops (such as general papers on *indexing* presented at conferences in France), the search results were limited to the subject field. The WebSpirs system translated the search statement to (*index** and (*france* or *french*)) in DE (DE = *descriptor*). The resulting 218 records include many French documents on automatic indexing, but none on book indexes.¹

In sum, there has apparently been no recent in-depth structural analysis by information scientists of the earliest French subject indexes, nor has anyone done a qualitative study of why subject indexes are not included in modern French books. An absolute claim cannot be made on the basis of negative search results, because these topics may have been discussed in a document that was either not covered, or not exhaustively indexed, by these databases.²

Book indexing in France has in fact been discussed in an article in *The Indexer* (Robertson, 1995). Although this journal is covered by *Library Literature* and *LISA*, the paper was not retrieved through the database searches because its scope is Continental Europe, not France alone, and the indexing of these databases is not exhaustive. 'French books do have indexes' is one of six sections of Robertson's paper; this heading is a response to an earlier piece in *The Indexer* (Mitford, 1990) claiming that French books never have indexes. Robertson states that 'provision of an index of some sort . . . is not . . . an absolute rarity in France' (1995: 161) but he does not provide quantitative data. His article is a qualitative analysis (mainly a critique) of selected European indexes.

An extract from a review of a French book in a recent issue of *The Indexer* (Shuttleworth, 1999: 195) criticizes the lack of an index. An earlier issue of *The Indexer* included two similar review extracts, with the observation on one that this is 'a common failing of French academic literature' (Shuttleworth, 1998: 98).

Methodology

To corroborate the anecdotal evidence and the impressions of librarians that many French books lack indexes, two kinds of data were collected.

- 1 A collection of uncatalogued non-fiction French books, primarily in the field of history, published in the 1970s and 1980s, was examined at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Only a few of several hundred books examined contain indexes, and these are indexes of names or technical terms, not concept indexes.
- 2 A search was conducted on the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), a large bibliographic utility, on the Library of Congress subject heading 'French Literature-20th Century', truncated to pick up topical subdivisions. This term would most often be assigned by library cataloguers to works of criticism, and sometimes to anthologies of such literature. (Genre headings are not assigned to individual works of literature.) Out of 2357 books on this subject in the French language, 294 (12 percent) have the word *index* in the note field.³

The standard search capabilities of RLIN do not allow for direct searches on a word in the note field; that is the reason for selecting a subject heading likely to be assigned to many French books – but not too many, or the system will not process the search. A more general statistic was obtained by asking a staff member of the Research Libraries Group to conduct a customized search on the cataloguing records for books contributed since 1997 by the Bibliothèque Nationale (Library Identifier FRBG) to RLIN, extracting those that have the string *index* in the note field (MARC tag 5XX). Fiction could not be excluded from the RLIN search, as this genre is coded in a fixed field (008). Out of 81,648 records from the Bibliothèque Nationale, 14,599 (17.9 percent) have an index. Since cataloguers do not indicate the type or quality of indexes (wouldn't it be nice if they did?), this search does not reveal how many current French publications have *subject* indexes. Although the data sets are not

exactly comparable, we may contrast the statistics on French books with the findings of Bishop et al. (1991: 25) that 82.2 percent of contemporary American academic non-fiction books have indexes.

The terminological and methodological problems of research on the history of indexing have already been discussed elsewhere (Weinberg, 1999b). The main ones are (1) that the term *index* is not used with a consistent meaning (i.e. it is ambiguous), and at the same time other words, such as *tabula*, are used to denote *index* in Latin manuscripts; and (2) that catalogues of manuscripts often fail to note indexes or to describe their salient features. Therefore, it is necessary to visit manuscript repositories to analyse early indexes. The following paragraphs provide details of how the list of French libraries to visit was compiled, thus enabling the reader to replicate the research, and also providing general guidelines on obtaining access to and working with manuscript collections in foreign countries.

Using Appendix 7 of Rouse and Rouse (1979: 311–407), which lists the repositories holding copies of the *Manipulus florum* (an early reference book, compiled in 1306, and arranged alphabetically by subject), I developed an itinerary for research in France. The *Manipulus florum* falls into the genre of *florilegia*, collections of excerpts from the works of noted authors. This work may be viewed as an index to multiple books, as it gives the sources of quotations on various theological topics. It is not the first subject index, or even the first *florilegium* (anthology) – Rochais (1964: 438) traces this genre back to the second or third century, and even alludes to its Hebrew biblical roots – but *Manipulus florum* is notable because it was copied so often. It was assumed that libraries holding copies of the *Manipulus florum* would possess other rare manuscript indexes.

The initial element of each entry in the Rouses' appendix is the name of the city in which the manuscript repository is located; many are in France. Since August is the month of '*les grandes vacances*', when the entire country shuts down, the research trip was planned for July. Certain institutions in France are closed on Mondays or on Tuesday afternoons, and so to avoid unpleasant surprises and maximize my time during the two-week trip, I wrote or faxed the libraries to request their schedules.⁴ Contacting the institutions was complicated by problems of obtaining up-to-date fax numbers.⁵ Most of the letters were sent via airmail as well. (Redundancy is an important principle in information science.) All the libraries responded, except for the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (despite being faxed twice).⁶ My itinerary called for a week in Paris, with afternoon trips to four neighbouring municipal libraries: Tours, Rouen, Reims and Troyes.⁷

The first institution to respond to my inquiry about its schedule was the municipal library of Lyons. Learning that the library would be closed the entire week of Bastille Day (14 July), I feared that my second week in France would be totally wasted, but the majority of libraries were closed only on the holiday itself. During that week, I had originally planned to visit the municipal libraries of Marseilles, Lyons and Nice, but the research was ultimately restricted to Lyons and Nice.⁸ Although it was not possible to visit the municipal library of Lyons, there is a major school of library and

information science in that city, whose director referred me to theological libraries that might have material of interest. The municipal library of Nice was officially closed for computerization during the week of Bastille Day, but the curator of manuscripts kindly gave me access to the collection.

The libraries visited are listed in Appendix 1. A letter of introduction from my Dean was needed at the larger libraries and was helpful in obtaining access to the original manuscripts, rather than just to microfilms. The smaller libraries simply required a passport for identification, which was retained while I was perusing the manuscripts. Most of the libraries allow researchers to take notes only with pencils, and a few require those who handle manuscripts to wear cotton gloves.

A list of publishers in the cities of major French manuscript repositories was compiled using the *International literary market place* (1999). The *Publishers' international ISBN directory* (1995) is more comprehensive, with 86 pages of its geographical volume devoted to France, but it does not describe the types of works that each publisher issues. In selecting publishers to contact from *ILMP*, I excluded those issuing belles-lettres only.

Despite customizing the letters to publishers⁹ by including the name and title of the editorial director, where available, out of the dozens of publishers contacted, only about one-third responded, and not all affirmatively. One inferred from my letter that I was interested in interviewing only publishers who omit indexes, but a clarifying phone call after my arrival in France led to an excellent interview. One publisher who was willing to be interviewed produces only numerical indexes of financial data. Several publishers (one of whom claimed that all his company's books contain complete and detailed indexes) responded after I had left the USA. Although the interview questions (in French) were mailed to them, I received no responses.

Some publishers in the southern part of the country initially agreed to an interview during the week that I was scheduled to be in Paris, but numerous phone calls enabled me to reschedule these interviews, as well as to confirm the library addresses and opening hours (this was not a sight-seeing trip!). The publishers interviewed are listed in Appendix 2 and the interview questions in Appendix 3.

Findings

Early indexes in manuscript collections in France

The Latin manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN) have recently been catalogued by Samaran (1962), but the majority of libraries visited have a printed catalogue compiled as part of a government project begun in the 19th century to document French manuscript holdings (France. Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 1849–; Ministère de l'instruction publique, des beaux-arts et des cultes, 1886–). Some of the catalogues have introductions that detail the history of the manuscript collections; most of the rare codices were transferred from neighbouring abbeys. The catalogues, which are arranged by manuscript number, generally contain indexes – not thorough subject indexes,

but they include genres, such as concordances. Like *index*, *concordance* is an ambiguous term: it refers to the synoptic Gospels as well as to word indexes. (The former meaning, the indication of parallel passages, persists in the concordance of the US patent classification to the international system; see United States, 1995.)

As time permitted, I also examined early manuscripts without indexes to search for features germane to indexing, such as tables of contents, chapter numbers, running heads, pagination or foliation, and internal cross-references. The manuscript division of the municipal library at Tours had a date index, which facilitated such research. Also, given my interest in early Hebrew indexes, I looked at Hebrew manuscripts dating from the period in which Latin indexes were compiled in France. Most of the catalogues group *Hebraica* in their indexes. In the following paragraphs I present my findings in a developmental sequence, beginning with structures that are relevant to indexes. The entries are highly selective, given the limitations of space.

Alphabets Alphabetical order is basic to indexes. When studying the history of indexes, non-Roman scripts are germane. In several Latin codices I found transliteration tables for Hebrew, which serve as evidence that Christian scholars tried to master Hebrew in order to study the Bible in its original language. The table in Reims ms. 84, leaf 222 includes the numerical value of the first eight Hebrew letters. The catalogue of Reims manuscripts¹⁰ dates this codex to the 12th century. I also encountered tables converting the Greek alphabet to Latin.¹¹ It is also worth noting, on the subject of character sets, that a 13th-century codex included an ampersand, while an index symbol (a hand pointing) was seen in a 14th-century commentary.¹²

Glossaries Various sources (see Weinberg, 1999b) indicate that dictionaries preceded subject indexes. Many Latin Biblical manuscripts examined include a section entitled 'Interpretationes nominum hebraicorum' (literally, 'interpretations of Hebrew names'); the cataloguers attributed many of these lists to St Jerome. The headwords of these glossaries are not in Hebrew script but in Latin transcription. One of these glossaries, written in the 11th century, was incorrectly described in the manuscripts catalogue of Tours¹³ as an index, but the glossary does not show where in the Book of Job a given Hebrew term occurs; that is, it lacks locators and hence is not an index. A sample entry is 'Ariel – Leo' (folio 101). (The Hebrew name actually means 'lion of God', but is simply translated as 'lion' in Latin.) This bilingual glossary of names is followed by an incomplete trilingual glossary (folio 106) of Hebrew words in transliteration, with equivalents in Greek (in the original script) and Latin. A sample entry for the first and third languages is 'Adama – Terra' (land). Like many modern term lists, the glossary is formatted in three columns. Contemporary information scientists should be aware that multilingual thesauri go back more than 1000 years.

Also related to glossaries and dictionaries are collections of distinctions, described by Rouse and Rouse (1979: 8–9) as the predecessors of concordances. The Rouses have written numerous articles on the information access tools of the

Middle Ages, but for reasons of space their relevant points cannot all be quoted here. Their publications contain many excellent observations on the features of early indexes, written from the perspective of medieval intellectual history rather than information science. Here I present the earliest indexes compiled in France in terms of their structural development, using the terminology of our discipline.

The format of 13th-century indexes differs radically from that of modern ones. Owing to limitations of space and monochrome printing, full-page illustrations of medieval indexes cannot be included here. However, the format of single entries and page design are described. In addition to citing published facsimiles, excerpts from illustrations supplied by the Municipal Library of Marseilles are included (Figs 1–5).

Verbal concordances The earliest indexes examined for this research were Latin concordances to the Bible. Using the Rouses' precise references, I examined the concordance of words and locators which preceded the more sophisticated concordance of words in context. I also saw many selective concordances, designed no doubt to fit in a clergyman's pocket.

What Biblical scholars call *verbal concordances* (Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 9; 1990) are examples of *derivative indexes*; the words are extracted from the text. The index to Borko and Bernier's textbook of indexing (1978: 244) has a *see* reference from *derived indexing* to *word indexing*. The earliest verbal concordance,¹⁴ compiled by Hugh of Saint-Cher before 1239 (Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 9), contains the two required elements of index entries: *headings* (words from the Bible) and *locators* (references to book and chapter of the Bible). This concordance aligns locators under headwords, as can be seen in Rouse and Rouse (1990: 220, illustration 142). The following excerpt is from the example they provide in the text (p. 219):

Abicere
Gen. xxi.c
xxv.a
Lev. xxv.b
xxvi.g
Judic. xvi.e

The headwords are underlined in the manuscript, not italicized as in the Rouses' transcription. Each headword is preceded by a paragraph symbol, which makes it easier to locate. The books of the Bible given in the locators are not arranged alphabetically but canonically. Weinberg (1997) discusses various sequences of Biblical books in Hebrew citation indexes; Christians use a different one. The chapter numbers given in the concordance in Roman numerals are those developed by Stephen Langton. The letters following those numbers indicate the relative position within the chapter (Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 9), as verse numbers for the Bible had not yet been developed. This locator system was invented for the concordance project. Where there are multiple references to a single book, all those following the first could have been indented, but pushing all the lines flush left may have been considered more attractive on a page consisting of four columns.

The more advanced verbal concordance added the optional element of index entries; that is, *subheadings* (a

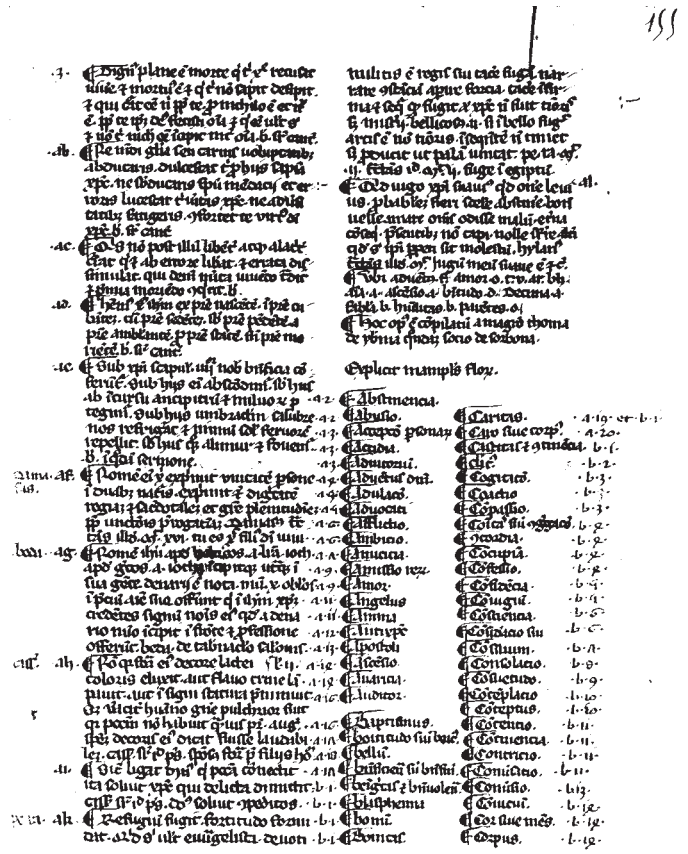


Figure 1. Beginning of the list of headwords following the end of the text of *Manipulus Florum*. Each headword is preceded by a paragraph symbol; a blank line separates letters of the alphabet. The locators, obviously in a different handwriting, are described by Rouse and Rouse (1979: 355) as 'contemporary foliation in letters and arabic numerals'.

phrase from the Bible to provide context for the word). Rouse and Rouse (1979: 10) describe the cumbersome nature of the *Concordanciae anglicanae*, which provided a lengthy context for each word. (Lengthy subheadings are not favoured in modern indexing practice either.) The third concordance compiled at Saint-Jacques, circa 1275, with a four-to-seven word context, was a success.¹⁵

There are two errors in the description of the format of this concordance in Rouse and Rouse (1990: 221). They state that each headword was centred (in the column). If so, given words of varying length, the headwords would not have been aligned. In fact, the headwords are 'tabbed' about one-third the width of the column. Each headword is preceded by a paragraph symbol and written in bold letters. The Rouses' transcription of a sample entry (1990: 221) contains the second error: whereas their text positions the headword above the locator, the manuscript (which they illustrate on p. 218), has the book and chapter number of the Bible underneath and to the left of the headword, as follows:

¶ **Abicere**
Gen. xxi. b abieci puerum subter
xxv. a -te deos alienos
Levi. xxvi. g -runt iudicia mea
Jud. xvi. e et a se repellere

While I have seen indexes in which the headings are emboldened and the subheadings are flush left, the positioning of locators to the left of a heading is new to me. The example also illustrates the placement of a locator before a

subheading, a structure also seen, in a run-in format, in an early 13th-century Hebrew citation index held by the Vatican Library (Weinberg, 1999b: 113). Finally, this excerpt from a medieval concordance demonstrates the arrangement of subheadings in the order of their occurrence in the text, rather than alphabetically.

Classified indexes What medievalists call a *real-concordance* (Rouse and Rouse, 1990; They, 1935) exemplifies *assignment indexing*. In this type of reference tool, the entries are arranged under subject headings that may not be articulated in the text. Rouse and Rouse (1990: 221–2) describe the first real-concordance: the theological concepts are arranged in a hierarchical sequence. Since this is not a known order, it is debatable whether such reference tools can be called indexes. It is perceptive of the Rouses, however, to note that a hierarchical index requires a thesaurus of subjects (p. 221). The headings in the first real-concordance would not meet modern criteria for descriptors, as they consist of lengthy phrases. The sample heading the Rouses transcribed is: *De unitate et concordia et eorum fructu* (p. 222).¹⁶ The disadvantages of classified concept indexes led to the development of alphabetical subject indexes.

Subject indexes to multiple works In 1256, Robert of Paris compiled an index to the works of St Augustine and others.¹⁷ This work is also described by Rouse and Rouse (1979: 14; 1990: 226–7). The headings (e.g. *Baptismus*, *Beatitudo*) are large and are alphabetized by the first two letters; the index includes subheadings. Rouse and Rouse (1990: 227) provide the example of the heading *Celeste*, subdivided by *Angeli*, and further subdivided into *Boni* and *Mali* (Heaven – Angels – Good/Bad). Their illustration (p. 227) reveals that the subheadings are not indented. (Much could be written on the wisdom of subordinating Angels to Heaven, rather than entering them directly.)

Subject indexes to single books The index to Richard Fishacre's commentary on the *Sentences* is officially dated 'before 1272'. In examining the work,¹⁸ I noted that the last leaf is dated 1265. I did not assign the heading 'back-of-the-book index' to this section because Fishacre's index is positioned in the front. The locators are in a different colour ink from the headings. (Imagine how much time it took to switch pens!) Rouse and Rouse (1979: 20, 22) state that the manuscript 'once bore line numbers for reference and indexing purposes' (I saw these on leaves 157b and 158, recorded between the two columns) and they cite (1979: 20, n. 39) the copies of the work that have complete line

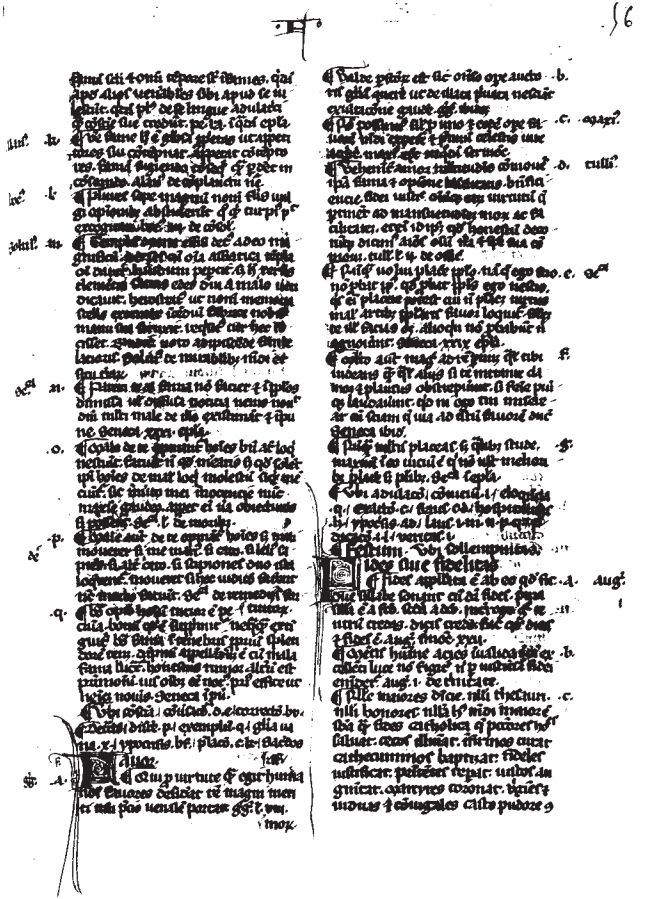


Figure 2. A page from the 'F' entries of *Manipulus Florum*. Each heading begins with a decorated initial. The initials alternate in red and blue (Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 355). The section heading on the right is 'Fides siue fidelitas' (transcription from Rouse and Rouse, 1979: 240). Lower-case letters serve as locators for each subsection under a heading, facilitating precise cross-references between entries. In the outer margins are abbreviated names of the authors from whose works the excerpts are taken.

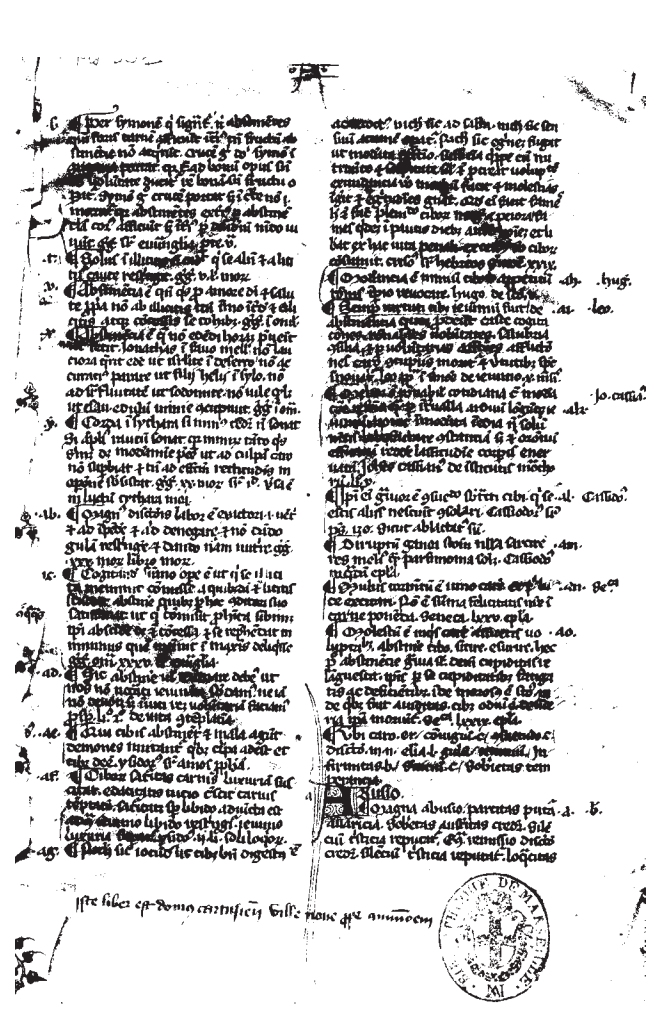


Figure 3. First available page of the copy of *Manipulus Florum* held by the Municipal Library of Marseilles. According to Rouse and Rouse (1979: 355), the first leaf was cut out. Note the use of a capital letter as a running head to orientate readers to their position in the alphabet.

Z and concluded '*Finis Indicis*'. I surmised that the original page numbers had been cut off during the rebinding process and folio numbers written in. Multiplying the folio numbers by two rendered the index serviceable. For example, an entry referring to page 55 was found on leaf 28, side a.

Modern French book indexing policies

Having surveyed medieval alphabetic tables to self-indexing reference works, we now jump to the end of the 20th century to examine how modern book indexing practices in France compare with those of the Middle Ages.

Although most of the French publishers interviewed knew at least some English, they all responded to my questions in French (quotations below are translated). They all gave me permission to tape the interviews and to mention their names and opinions in this article. It was interesting to hear all the English clichés about indexes translated into French: the index is the key, the index is a complement to the text; the index adds value to the book; the index permits rapid access and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge.

The publishers interviewed do not subscribe to the view that all non-fiction books require indexes; reference books, research publications and philological books were among the categories mentioned as requiring indexes. The scientific publisher TEC & DOC believes that all its books require indexes. Most French publishers think that books designed for the general public do not need indexes. Picking up on the title of my paper '*Indexes and Religion*', which set the context for the discussion, the director of Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH) said: 'There is no religion to have indexes in all books'. The managing director of Karthala opined that only one in five non-fiction books needs an index.

Index compilation is viewed by French publishers as an author's responsibility. Some firms (CNRS, TEC & DOC) require authors to supply an index; others, such as Karthala and MSH, leave it up to the author to suggest that an index be included. Such authors were described as 'motivated' and 'demanding'. The director of Presses Universitaires de Lyon (PUL) opined that a publisher supports an index by providing the pages for it, as inclusion of an index raises a book's price.

French publishers believe that authors are best suited to compile indexes, as these access tools are part of their manuscripts. Author highlights were mentioned by several publishers (Karthala, TEC & DOC) as a technique for index compilation.²¹ In some cases, subheadings are provided manually. TEC & DOC actually mentions this technique in its contract (Article 4, section 1, paragraph 2):

L'Auteur remettra également, à la même date, l'index – la liste des termes à faire apparaître – et signalera ces mots à chaque apparition dans le manuscrit (par exemple en les soulignant, ou en les surlignant avec un stylo fluorescent). [The author will also submit, on the same date, the index – the list of terms to appear – and will mark these terms at each appearance in the manuscript (for example by underlining them, or by drawing a line through them with a fluorescent marker).]

Chronique Sociale does the opposite: the editor, after reading the manuscript, gives the author a list of index

terms, because many authors do not know how to make an index. Most French publishers do not give authors guidelines on the compilation of indexes, even when an index is required in the contract. TEC & DOC is an exception: their indexing guide is out of print and is being revised.

CNRS does not mention indexes in book contracts but has a style manual for each of its subject series. The editor interviewed gave me a copy of the manual for *Collection Sciences du Langage* (language sciences series). The guidelines for the index are in section 2, significantly, before those for the body of the work. Following are the two relevant clauses:

- L'index des notions est obligatoire. On peut ajouter un index des noms ou ceux-ci peuvent être listés dans l'index des notions [ou] dans un index général. [A subject index is mandatory. One may add an index of names or these may be listed in a subject index [or] in a general index.]
- On peut aussi avoir un index séparé pour les langues. [One may also have a separate index for languages.]

If the author does not compile the index, CNRS will not publish the book.

French editors do not study indexing; standardizing the format of bibliographic references is their main job, as authors are not trained in this. One publisher told me that copy-editors revise an index 'only if it's stupid'. Although several publishers knew of freelance indexers, the director of PUL saw no need for them: 'Un logiciel existe' (software exists). A similar opinion was expressed by one of the publishers who wrote to me after I had left for France: it is increasingly possible to produce indexes automatically as a by-product of computerized composition. None of the publishers or librarians interviewed knew of a professional society for book indexers in France.

The majority of French publishers do not believe that indexes increase the sales of a book, although TEC & DOC's representative said that the lack of an index may reduce sales. Publishers whose market is university libraries believe in the importance of indexes. Karthala observed that inclusion of an index is a gauge of the scientific quality of a book. When I mentioned patron searches of indexes in bookstores, Karthala's director agreed that these access tools may have an effect on individuals' purchases of books, especially on authors who find themselves cited. The director of PUL offered a dissenting opinion: 'Authors believe that indexes increase the sales of a book; publishers are not convinced'.

A few French publishers have noticed comments on indexes in book reviews, mainly when indexes are lacking, flawed, incomplete, or particularly detailed. '*Saluons l'index*' ('Let us salute the index') is a charming phrase quoted by the director of Karthala from a favourable review. The director of MSH said that indexes are rarely mentioned in French reviews because they are considered a normal part of a book! (Cf. statistics above.)

The editorial director of TEC & DOC gave me a copy of a press release for a lengthy book published by the firm, noting the possibility of gaining immediate access to concepts and names through the index of 7785 terms. The firm's catalogues often mention the type of index included. In browsing through the Agronomy catalogue for 1999/2000,

I noticed *Index des parasites* (p. 32) and *Index des synonymes* (p. 54) among the annotations. Most of the publishers interviewed who issue books with indexes do not note this feature in their catalogues, except for those who receive cataloguing data from the national library (MSH). In response to my question about mentioning indexes in their catalogues, a couple of publishers said, 'Good idea!'; they could see the advantages of this, especially for mail-order sales. Thus my interviews may have heightened the awareness of indexes among French publishers.

Discussion

French public libraries possess an extraordinary number of medieval manuscripts. Even at the planning stage of the present research, in perusing the data in the *World guide to libraries* (1993) on the number of manuscripts and incunabula held by municipal libraries in France, the richness of these collections was apparent. Very few US public libraries possess thousands of rare books and medieval manuscripts, since the country was not even founded when the earliest indexes were being written in France.

The enormity of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, its elaborate security procedures (registration cards, lockers, passes), the poorly indexed catalogues, and the limit of five manuscripts per day rendered it impracticable to do anything in the Western Manuscripts Division in the limited time available other than examine known items; that is, the early Latin indexes cited with precise call numbers by Rouse and Rouse (1979).

My experience at the BN, contrasted with that of libraries in other French cities, brought to mind Michael Gorman's observation (1998: 30) that users love small libraries. Interestingly, although Gorman's book includes a meditation praising indexes and he singles out the omission of indexes in French books for criticism (p. 171), his own book itself lacks an index.²² At the smaller libraries, including the Semitic Division of the BN, it was possible to examine complete manuscript collections, or at least select the items of interest from the library's catalogue.

Michael Gorman is the editor of *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (2nd edn, 1978), the code known as AACR2, which is now generally cited as the authority for name headings in indexes. One of the radical differences between AACR2 and the first edition (AACR1, 1967) is in the formulation of headings for institutions. In its rules for corporate bodies, AACR1 (ch. 3) distinguished between societies and institutions (rules 98–9), for consistency with prior cataloguing practice (p. 141, n. 26). Associations were entered under their names (e.g. Society of Indexers), while institutions were entered under place (e.g. Paris. Bibliothèque Nationale.) Although the cataloguing rule has changed (the index to AACR2 refers from 'Institutions' to 'Corporate bodies'), place remains the primary element in indexes of cited manuscripts – often the only indexes one finds in books on the history of the book, such as the French work *Mise en page et mise en texte du livre manuscrit* (Martin and Vezin, 1990).²³

The rationale for the superseded cataloguing rule, that institutions do not move, underscores the need to travel to

foreign countries, and various cities within them, to examine the earliest indexes. The point has been made above that the secondary literature on the history of indexes is scattered among different disciplines; this is easier to gather, however, than the primary documents, which cannot be borrowed on interlibrary loan. Very few medieval manuscripts have been fully digitized for mounting on the Web.²⁴ Even if all the manuscripts in French libraries were digitized, it would still be necessary to examine the originals to distinguish locators recorded originally from those added later (see Fig. 1). A curator at the BN Division orientale spent some time checking the ink used to record chapter numbers on a Hebrew Biblical manuscript, to confirm my theory that they were not part of the original text.

Even if indexers were to examine all the manuscripts in every repository throughout the world, we will never be able to make definitive statements about the invention of indexing because so much of the early evidence has been destroyed. There has not been much natural decay of medieval manuscripts written on parchment and vellum, but there was intentional burning of books, particularly of Hebrew religious texts. This point is made strongly in Garel's (1991) exhibition catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts in French libraries. In examining the catalogue of manuscripts at Tours, I noticed an entry for a library manual compiled several centuries ago. My request to examine it could not be filled, as this and many other rare works (half the collection) were destroyed in the bombing of the Tours library during the Second World War. Sadly, a piece of our history has been lost.

I was taken aback that most of the French librarians and publishers I met were unaware that indexes had been invented in France, although some were not surprised to hear this, or that the earliest indexes were in the domain of religion. The editorial director of TEC & DOC, a scientific publisher, knew of early indexes to herbals. Travel guides to France boast about inventions made by the French, yet none I have seen discuss the phenomenal advance in access to information called the *index*. The director of Karthala observed that despite the invention of subject indexes in France, there is currently a 'weak tradition' of indexing.

Before undertaking this research, I had been prepared to encounter the view that French books lack indexes because indexes discourage reading. No such philosophical positions were expressed by the publishers interviewed, however. The reasons for the lack of indexes in French books are entirely pragmatic and related to economics. This contrasts sharply with the sociocultural explanation of Rouse and Rouse (1991) for the development of indexes in France, in their article dealing with 'new attitudes to the page'.

An observation of Professor Malachi Beit-Arié (1993: 78) regarding a difference between Latin and Hebrew manuscripts may be germane here. He noted that the majority of Latin manuscripts were produced under institutional auspices, while Hebrew ones were initiated individually. The institutional setting for the writing of many 13th-century Latin indexes was the monastery, and the monks serving as scribes were supported by the Church. Therefore, they had the time to write alternating index headings in red and blue ink, and to add gold leaf to the initial letters. In

contrast, contemporary French academics who are trying to get books published are not free of concerns for their livelihood.

A professor of library science in Lyons expressed the view that the omission of indexes in many French books is due to 'laziness'. Responding to my question, 'How do people do research without indexes?', Françoise Lerouge stated that they use tables of contents (which are often placed at the back of French books) and consult cited references.

Several editors interviewed were of the opinion that an index of cited authors is the most important type of reference tool to be appended to a book, but Professor Lerouge observed that cumulative citation indexes (such as *Social Sciences Citation Index*) are not used to evaluate French scholars in the same way as they are in the US. Whereas frequency of citation counts for promotion and tenure at American universities, the number of publications (i.e. productivity) is the sole criterion for advancement in French academe.

A search of the online catalogue of the school of library and information science at Lyons (enssib) using the subject heading 'Indexation', revealed no French publications on traditional methods of book indexing (though the library does have some of the American classics, and the international standard for indexing has been translated into French: AFNOR, 1997). There were, however, numerous records for French books and theses about automatic indexing. This brought to mind a paper (delivered at an information science conference) on the application of artificial intelligence to enhance a serial index that I consider poorly structured. My reaction was: they have not even applied the products of human intelligence to this index! Similarly, modern French authors and publishers, without studying traditional methods of index compilation, have jumped to automatic techniques for book and journal indexing. Mulvany and Milstead (1994) have shown that even special software designed for book indexing fails; the French are merely using the simple index compilation features of word processors.

Conclusions

The research in France confirms my earlier thesis, based on research at the Vatican Library (Weinberg, 1999b), that early indexes were compiled primarily in the field of religion. Medieval indexes housed in French repositories include Biblical concordances and subject indexes to the works of the Church Fathers. These works have been described in the literature of religious studies and medieval intellectual history. Many of these indexes contain sophisticated structural and formatting features that are lacking in modern reference tools. The present paper has applied the technical terminology of indexing to these early reference works and linked the literature of the aforementioned disciplines to that of library/information science.

The state of modern book indexing in France is not nearly as advanced as it is in the USA or Great Britain. A successful American or British freelance indexer would not be advised to relocate to France, as French publishers do not perceive a need for their services. The frequent omission of book

indexes, or their production by automatic means, serves as evidence that the rich French heritage of subject indexing, begun more than seven centuries ago, has been lost.

Directions for further research

As the French say, *ça va sans dire* (it goes without saying) that more libraries could be visited and additional publishers interviewed to corroborate the statements made here, but I hope that my samples of libraries and publishers in France are representative. In the following paragraphs I describe plans for further research, based on my experiences in France.

The book on Hebrew manuscripts mentioned above, edited by the curator of the BN's Division orientale (Garel, 1991), includes an illustration of a Hebrew Masoretic list containing alphabetically arranged words from the Bible followed by the phrases that contain them (p. 45). Such lists, which date at least from the 10th century, may have provided the model for the Latin concordances of words in context which I examined in French libraries. The purpose of Masoretic activity was to standardize the text of the (Hebrew) Bible; Chenu (1950: 40) ascribes the same purpose to Hugh of Saint-Cher, director of the first Latin concordance project – to eliminate the corruptions to the Vulgate. (A colleague cautions against inferring influence from parallel structures, as it is difficult to prove that there was contact between Jews and Christians in 13th-century France.) The Masoretic lists lack locators, an essential element of indexes, but given the widespread memorization of the Hebrew Bible, the location may have been implicit in the phrase. In other words, the knowledgeable reader could be expected to recognize the book of the Bible in which the phrase is found.²⁵

The numbering of the chapters of the Bible, which provided locators for concordances, is generally credited to Stephen Langton, who lived in the 1200s. However, among the illustrations in a pamphlet (Simms, 1988)²⁶ on *The Book of Kells*, a famous Irish manuscript, is one of a canon table (Plate XVI) including corresponding chapter numbers for parallel passages of the four Gospels.²⁷ Since the *Book of Kells* dates from the early 9th century at the latest (Simms, 1988: text facing Plate XVII), chapter numbers for the Bible clearly existed several centuries before Langton. Rouse and Rouse (1979: 29) cite sources indicating that the New Testament was divided into numbered chapters in the 2nd or 3rd century CE; Langton's contribution was to standardize them. A colleague (who prefers not to be credited) has pointed out that Langton's numbers became standard because of their use in a major concordance. What an interesting idea – that an important index turns its locators into a standard!

From Professor Sid Leiman, of Brooklyn College, I learned that a system of numbering the chapters of Biblical books with Hebrew letters was developed by the Masoretes. It was recently revived in *The Jerusalem Bible* published by Koren (Bible. O.T. Hebrew, 1997: VII), although the majority of Jewish Bibles use the chapter numbering that was developed by Christians. Much research remains to be done to identify the earliest occurrences of locators and other features of texts that are germane to indexing.²⁸

I ask the reader's indulgence as I conclude with several personal observations. Dorothy Thomas, in her oral history

of ASI indexers, inquired what I do when I can't concentrate on indexing. Her follow-up question to my answer that I have no leisure time was: 'You don't water the plants?' I responded, 'I have no plants . . . nature is irrelevant to my lifestyle' (Thomas, 1995: 51–2). Therefore, it is ironic that I spent the majority of my time in France examining *florilegia*, literally collections of [choice] flowers (Rochais, 1964: 437).

I used to think that I had two unrelated interests: indexing and grammar. Through this research I have come to realize that the two are closely related. I believe that the origins of indexing can be found in the word lists compiled by the Hebrew grammarians known as the Masoretes. Grammar was considered the foundation of knowledge in the classification of disciplines developed in the Middle Ages (Hunt, 1948). Several of the Christian clergymen who compiled early Latin concordances and indexes (e.g. Robert Kilwardby and Hugh of St Cher) also wrote about grammar.

I have often observed that in the field of library/information science, you get to use everything you have learned. Indexers who handle books in a variety of disciplines can surely relate to this idea. My high school Latin and college French courses facilitated this research on the earliest subject indexes, and my elementary school Hebrew provides the basis for further research.

A French article about early Christian citation indexes, referring to the works of two English clergymen, suggests that they were a 'prélude de la sagacité et l'ardeur anglo-saxonne pour le travail de l'indexing' [prelude to the sagacity and fervor of the Anglo-Saxons for the work of indexing] (Ghellinck, 1935: 423). Associating talent and enthusiasm for indexing with a specific ethnic group is a novel idea, worthy of further exploration in the international journal of indexing. This study suggests that a nation that took indexing to a high level may have lost its enthusiasm for it. *C'est dommage* [It's a pity].

One of the Anglo-Saxons who advanced the art of book indexing was Robert Kilwardby. Callus (1948: 248) wrote of a stage in Kilwardby's life when he felt 'not yet . . . sufficiently proficient in theology to discuss competently the problem of divine science'. Perhaps it was his own lack of knowledge, rather than the needs of his students, that motivated Kilwardby to synthesize and index the literature of theology. This suggests the need to explore individual psychology, as well as national psychology, as a factor in the development of indexes.

Acknowledgements

All figures are from Bibl. mun. Marseille, ms. 31; cliché IRHT-CNRS. This 14th-century manuscript originally belonged to the Carthusian priory of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon Rouse and Rouse (1979: 355). I thank Jean-Pierre Codaccioni, Assistant Qualifié de Conservation, Bibliothèque Municipale, Marseille, for supplying the illustrations, and Elisabeth Lalou, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, for granting permission to reproduce the illustrations with this article.

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Notes

- 1 To save trees, only the titles of the 218 documents were printed for the purpose of making relevance judgements.
- 2 For a discussion of the exhaustivity of indexing, see Weinberg (1999a).
- 3 Cataloguers record the note 'Includes index' for books that have one.
- 4 French-speaking colleagues helped me polish the language (which I studied in high school and college, more years ago than I care to admit). The text of the generic letter is available from the author on request. Where the information was available, the letter was personally addressed to the manuscripts curator.
- 5 I had access only to the 1993 edition of *World guide to libraries*, rather than the 1999 edition, and it contained few fax numbers. *International literary market place: ILMP* (1999) includes a directory of the major libraries in France, which was helpful for determining fax numbers, though since many area codes in France were changed recently, it took some time to find out the new numbers and get the faxes through.
- 6 The reason for this may have been that I wrote to the new library, the only address given in *ILMP*, but manuscripts are still housed in the old building.
- 7 This was made possible because the curator of the Tours collection afforded me access on a day when the library was officially closed.
- 8 The library of Marseilles received my letter late, responding after I had left the US. Like the public library of Lyons, it was closed for the entire week of Bastille Day. Because no publishers from Marseilles answered me in advance of the trip either, I cancelled the plan to visit that city and extended my stay in Lyons.
- 9 The full text of the letter to publishers is available from the author on request.
- 10 France. Ministère de l'instruction publique, des beaux-arts et des cultes (1886–, vol. 39: 84).
- 11 Given that my first published paper (Weinberg, 1974) dealt with transliteration, I was excited to see these tables.
- 12 Respectively, Nice, ms. 10, Nice, ms. 2, leaf 164A.
- 13 France. Ministère de l'instruction publique, des beaux-arts et des cultes (1886–, vol. 35: 13, entry 18).
- 14 BN ms. lat. 16279.
- 15 BN ms. lat. 15250.
- 16 A page from this reference work (BN ms. lat. 601) is reproduced by Rouse and Rouse (1990: 220, ill. 143).
- 17 BN ms. lat. 16334.
- 18 BN ms. lat. 15754.
- 19 BN ms. lat. 15986.

- 20 Reims ms. 367.
- 21 The author highlights the significant terms in the text; these are input with page references and then sorted to create an 'automatic' index.
- 22 I had to do a sequential search to find the passages relating to small libraries, which are quite far apart (pp. 30 and 84). I recalled having read these in prepublication excerpts from the book.
- 23 The lack of a subject index in this book, which treats the invention of subject indexing, is frustrating. Given the book's price – close to \$200 – one could say the omission is inexcusable.
- 24 The Digital Scriptorium, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/scriptorium>, may be consulted for the holdings of several American repositories.
- 25 I came up with the concept of implicit locator independently, but subsequently encountered a French cognate in documenting this paper. An encyclopaedic article on florilegia (Rochais, 1964: 445, 447) refers to *citations implicites/explicites*; i.e. implied and explicit bibliographic references.
- 26 After finishing my research in Nice, I travelled to Monaco and visited the Princess Grace Irish Library, where the tour guide, after learning I was a librarian, presented me with this pamphlet.
- 27 It brings to mind the Patent Concordance of *Chemical Abstracts*, which gave the corresponding numbers of patents taken out in various countries for a single invention. The Patent Concordance was a separate table until 1980; afterwards, it was incorporated into the Patent Index, obviating a triple look-up in *Chemical Abstracts*.
- 28 Discussed in a paper focusing on standards for manuscript cataloguing, to be presented at the conference of the International Federation of Library Associations in Jerusalem in August 2000.

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Appendix 1: Libraries visited

The entries are arranged alphabetically by city. When known, the name and title of the manuscripts curator are given.

Lyon

école nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (enssib)
 François Dupuigrenet Desroussilles, Directeur
 Université Catholique de Lyon
 Michèle Behr, Conservateur
 Claude Nemon, [Assistant]

Monaco

Princess Grace Irish Library
 Judith Anne Gantley, Assistant Editor

Nice

Bibliothèque Municipale Classée de Nice
 Roland Giraud, Conservateur en Chef, Département Patrimoine

Paris

Bibliothèque Nationale
Departments Visited: Département des Manuscrits (Division occidentale, Division orientale)

Reims

Bibliothèque Municipale de Reims
 Nicolas Galaud, Conservateur

Rouen

Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen
 M.D. Nobécourt, Conservateur en chef, Chargée du fonds ancien

Tours

Bibliothèque Municipale
 Michèle Prevost, Conservateur

Troyes

Bibliothèque Municipale à Vocation Régionale
 François Berquet, Conservateur chargé du Patrimoine

Appendix 2: Publishers interviewed

The entries are arranged alphabetically by publisher's name. The name and title of the interviewee are given.

Chronique Sociale

André Soutrenon, Commercial Director (*interviewed by phone, 15 July 1999*)

CNRS Editions (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)

Anne Cadiot, Editor of reference books

Karthala Editions

Robert Ageneau, Managing Director

Maison des Sciences de l'Homme

Maurice Aymard, Directeur

Presses Universitaires de Lyon

André Pelletier, Managing Director

(Editions) TEC & DOC (Technique et Documentation Lavoisier)

Jean-Marc Bocabeille,

Directeur éditorial, sciences, techniques, industries

Appendix 3: Interview questions

The French text of the questions is available from the author on request.

- 1 Do you grant permission to record this interview?
- 2 Do you prefer that I speak in English or French? May I ask questions in English and you respond in French?
- 3 I would like to explain the background of this research. I am a professor of library science and a former president of the American Society of Indexers. I encountered the claim that indexes were invented in France, but many modern French books lack indexes. [*Pause for comment.*]
- 4 What is your company's policy on indexes?
- 5 In the contracts of your publishing house, are authors responsible for the compilation of indexes or for paying a professional indexer?
- 6 In your opinion, does an index enhance the sales of a book?
- 7 In your experience, do book reviews comment on indexes?
- 8 In the catalogues of your publishing house, do you note the inclusion of indexes?
- 9 Do you grant permission to cite your opinions and name you and your company in the article which will result from this research?