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How to Make an Index

Henry Benjamin Wheatley (1838–1917) was a bibliographer and editor with a prodigious output of books and articles to his name. Brought up after the death of both his parents by his brother Benjamin Robert, himself a skilled bibliographer and cataloguer, Henry compiled catalogues for learned societies and worked for many years for the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Arts; he was a founder member of the Library Association and of the Early English Text Society, and produced an edition of Pepys' diary which was not superseded until the 1970s. This work is one of two which he produced on the subject of indexing, and which led him to become known as 'the father of British indexing': the Wheatley Medal awarded by the Society of Indexers is named after him. This book, published in 1902, sets out the rules and practicalities of indexing, and also contains examples of how *not* to make an index; it was for many years the text to which all professional indexers referred, and still makes fascinating reading today.

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HENRY BENJAMIN WHEATLEY



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The Book-Lover's Library.

Edited by

Henry B. Wheatley, F.S.A

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HOW TO MAKE AN INDEX

BY

HENRY B. WHEATLEY, F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO CATALOGUE A LIBRARY"
"HOW TO FORM A LIBRARY," ETC., ETC.

"M. Bochart . . . me prioit surtout d'y faire un
Index, etant, disoit-il, l'âme des gros livres."—
Menagiana.

LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW

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PREFACE.

IN 1878 I wrote for the Index Society, as its first publication, a pamphlet entitled "What is an Index?" The present little book is compiled on somewhat similar lines; but, as its title suggests, it is drawn up with a more practical object. The first four chapters are "Historical," and the other four are "Practical"; but the historical portion is intended to lead up to the practical portion by showing what to imitate and what to avoid.

There has been of late years a considerable change in public opinion with respect to the difficulties attending the making of both indexes and catalogues. It was once

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a common opinion that anyone without preparatory knowledge or experience could make an index. That that opinion is not true is amply proved, I hope, in the chapter on the "Bad Indexer."

I have attempted to describe the best way of setting to work on an index. To do this with any hope of success it is necessary to give details that may to some seem puerile, but I have ventured on particulars for which I hope I may not be condemned.

I must also ask the forbearance of my readers for the constant use of the personal pronoun. If I could have left it out, I would gladly have done so; but to a great extent this book relates to the experiences of an old indexer. They must be taken for what they are worth, and I hope forgiveness will be extended to me for the form in which these experiences are related.

H. B. W.

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