papers are readable, and the price is not exorbitant in today's terms. PRECIS (Pre-

served Context Indexing System), de-

veloped by Derek Austin and his associates

at the British National Bibliography, is

probably the most important innovation in

indexing since coordinate indexing was de-

veloped by Taube in the 1950s.

The workshop combined descriptions of

PRECIS and its use at the British Library

with papers on research and applications

elsewhere. Austin's three papers on de-

velopment of the system, its syntax and

semantics, and management aspects go into

more useful detail than the several articles

that have appeared. Jutta Sørensen's paper

on multilingual aspects presents us with

tantalizing glimpses of the possibilities of

automatic translation of PRECIS strings so

that indexing done in one language can

serve several others. Intellectually, such

transformations appear to be possible; it is

too early to judge yet whether they would

be operationally practicable.

The section on research projects contains

three comparisons of PRECIS with subject

headings and title words, by Phyllis A.

Richmond, Valentina de Bruin, and Ann H.

Schabas. De Bruin's report will be of spe-

cial interest to academic librarians because

the eventual goal of her work is to apply

PRECIS in the library of the University of

Toronto. She devised comparative PRECIS,

subject headings, and keyword indexes for

books in special subjects for departmental

librarians to use. Richmond compared

PRECIS (from BNB), LC subject headings

(from OCLC and NUC), and a KWIC in-
dex; while Schabas offered an SDI (Selec-
tive Dissemination of Information) service

from UK MARC tapes, comparing retrieval

on titles, PRECIS subject headings, and

combinations of these. The first two found

that PRECIS provided more access points

and more precise indications of the subject

matter of the work than did subject head-
ings. Titles performed as poorly as would

be expected. Schabas' study was still in

progress, but the results appear to be simi-

lar.

In the section on practical applications

there are reports of manual PRECIS applic-
cation in a Canadian high school library,
of audiovisual indexing at the College Bib-
liocentre in Ontario, and of film indexing

at the National Film Board of Canada. The

authors are all enthusiastic over the quality

of access available with PRECIS.

C. Donald Cook provides a thoughtful
discussion of the future of practical appli-
cation of PRECIS in North America in the
context of subject heading dominance via
Library of Congress and National Library
of Canada practice.

The reviewer is left with some questions

that are not criticisms either of this book

or of the PRECIS system, but rather of the

nature of "where should we go from here?"

How costly is PRECIS to apply com-
pared with current systems? A study has
been performed that should answer this
question, but the results have not been dis-
seminated in the United States.

Since many of the horrid examples given

in comparisons with subject headings are
simply bad cataloging and not inherent in
the system, how would PRECIS fare if its
authority files contained as many millions
of records as LC's subject heading files?

If LC and North American libraries finally
face the logical consequences of the
knowledge that the present subject heading
system is breaking down and decide to
adopt a new system, should PRECIS be
adopted or should we go back to square
one and try to determine what kind of sys-
tem would best meet our needs?—Jessica
L. Harris, Associate Professor, St. John's
University, Jamaica, New York.

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port No. 5233; London: British Library,
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Simpson, Antony E. Guide to Library Re-
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Simpson has provided a well-written,
comprehensive guide to library research
that should serve as a model for guides in
other social science disciplines. While de-
dsigned specifically for researchers and stu-
dents in public administration, this volume
encompasses material of use to all fields of
the social sciences and, therefore, supple-
ments guides such as The Student Sociol-
The guide under review differs from most in that it emphasizes bibliographic tools and techniques necessary for research, rather than stressing descriptions of journals, theories, etc. While such information is provided, it is not included at the expense of bibliographic information. Traditional topics, such as the card catalog, indexes/abstracts, bibliographies, and government documents, are discussed, as are archival research and computer literature searching.

Regarding the card catalog and government documents, one statement is somewhat misleading. Simpson indicates that "The only separately published items generally not [emphasis in original] included in the catalogs are those special collections of documents maintained on microform" (p.87). Many libraries, especially those employing SuDocs classification, do not catalog documents in any format, not only microform. This criticism notwithstanding, this is an excellent guide that will be of use to researchers and students in a wide range of social science disciplines.—David R. McDonald, Social Science Bibliographer, Farrell Library, Kansas State University, Manhattan.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS


Contains references to articles, books, and conference proceedings in the area of research and development management in industrial and government laboratories.