European Taxonomic Literature 1966. Even in such a relatively small science as plant taxonomy, keeping abreast of literature becomes more and more difficult as the volume of published papers increases annually. Anything which makes this task easier can only be welcomed and clearly this index* to the literature and new names for the vascular plants of Europe is useful to anybody concerned with the flora of Europe. Following the same format as its predecessor, the Index for 1965, the area it covers includes all of Europe, as defined by Flora Europaea, together with some countries on the periphery. It lists all taxonomic papers and all new taxa down to form published in 1966. The information is clearly presented and no doubt as complete as can reasonably be expected but it does raise at least one general point. Out of the two hundred or so years of European taxonomic literature there are now guides in book form for two of these years. In twenty years time, there may be twenty volumes to wade through—each one larger and fatter than its predecessor. It is at least debatable whether printed book form is the best way to present this kind of information and with the increasing number of guides to literature being produced some thought should be given to this question. It should also be borne in mind that guides and indexes of this kind, useful though they are, are of secondary importance relative to original taxonomic work and taxonomists who involve themselves in such chores should clearly realise this. Despite these general remarks, this index does give a lead to information published in many lesser known periodicals that could easily be overlooked; although in this respect one can only wonder how complete is the coverage of Soviet periodicals. For botanists working on European plants in small institutes with less than ideal library facilities, it is undoubtedly a useful reference work.

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*R. K. Brummitt and I. K. Ferguson. Index to European taxonomic literature for 1966. (Regnum vegetabile vol. 53), 245 pp., paperback, published 29 February 1968. Price U.S. 6.35 dollars (for members of I.A.P.T.: U.S. 3.00 dollars).

Soviet Botany.* This is, in Mr. Shetler's own words, a popular account of the history of the Komarov Botanical Institute in Leningrad. Although the author spent a few days in the Institute and has been in correspondence with members of staff there, most of the information has been compiled from literary sources. Before launching into the history which forms the main body of the book, the author sets the scene with a brief history of St. Petersburg followed by his personal impressions of modern Leningrad.

The Komarov Botanical Institute was formed in 1931 by the union of two separate institutions—the Botanic Garden and the Botanical Museum, both of which had played an active part in plant sciences in Russia. The Institute continued to develop and in 1940 was named in honour of V. L. Komarov who was then director of the Department of Systematics and Geography of Vascular Plants. Komarov is perhaps best known in connection with the Flora URSS which came under his editorship from 1931 until his death in 1945. This massive 30-volume work completed in 1960 represents, whatever its failings may be, one of the great achievements of the Institute.

In 1960 the Institute was reorganised into twenty-four laboratories, grouped into nine main departments including cryptogams, geobotany, economic botany, evolutionary morphology and certain aspects of plant physiology, as well as vascular plants, the latter being supported by the huge Leningrad herbarium which is housed in the main Institute building. In systematics the emphasis is still on classical descriptive methods and the author suggests that this may prove to be a boon rather than an hindrance in the surge of research into tropical botany where many of the future interests of the Institute lie.

Mr. Shetler has written a pleasing, readable book and the many photographs of eminent Soviet botanists, both past and present, add interest. It should prove a worth-while investment to anyone who wishes to learn something of Soviet botany (previous accounts being only readily available in Russian) and especially to botanists who intend to visit the Institute.

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* The Komarov Botanical Institute: 250 Years of Russian Research by Stanwyn G. Shetler. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 1968. XIV, 240 pp + 29 plates. Price $5.95.