## A survey of English spelling
**Edward Carney**
*London and New York: Routledge, 1994. xxvii + 535 pp.*

Another essential reference work. This is an account of the nature of English spelling, a thorough search to find what regularities actually exist in the writing system – 'to see how traditional orthography works, or fails to work' (p. xviii). It is not a historical account, explaining the present with reference to the past, which is usual in accounts of English spelling. It is a functional account, a descriptive study of the modern system, using computational help in places, including (another unusual feature) the spelling of names, and drawing attention to the differences between British and American spelling. After two introductory chapters on theoretical and methodological issues, and an account of the corpora which form the database, the bulk of the book is devoted to a careful and systematic examination of the relationships between sounds and spellings. Carney looks in both directions: Chapter 3 deals with speech-to-text correspondences (e.g. what spellings are used for the long vowel /iː/) and Chapter 4 with text-to-speech correspondences (e.g. what sounds are signalled by spellings involving the graph ⟨a⟩). There are additional chapters on homographs and homophones, the spelling of names, and standardization and spelling reform. And the book concludes with indexes of topics, words, spelling correspondences, initial and final letter strings, and spelling errors and respellings. The author says at one point that he is shy of calling his work a 'survey'; but it is in fact the most through-going survey of English graphology that we have yet seen (or are likely to see for some time).