

## **August Indexer '99 Second International Conference of the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI) Hobart 27-29 August 1999**

The Second International Conference of the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI), sponsored by Indexing Research of Rochester, New York, was held in Hobart, Tasmania from 27 to 29 of August 1999. Fifty-three people attended, including delegates from Britain, America and New Zealand. Papers covered a range of subjects including website, database, bibliographic, book and journal indexing as well as the publishing world, metadata, and children's use of indexes. There were many contributors and parallel sessions were arranged to allow all papers offered to be presented.

Throughout the conference there were half-hour demonstrations of indexing systems: DB Textworks, HTML Indexer, Macrex, SkyIndex, and Cindex; the last presented by Frances Lennie, representing our major sponsor.

The keynote speaker, Robyn Colman from Quill Australia Pty Ltd, emphasised the importance of indexers providing easy access for the users of information; accessibility of information and the usability of the index are of paramount importance. Indexers need to advertise their skills to those who provide the information in whatever form it is presented. Robyn's issues were raised again by speakers throughout the conference. Glenda Browne (freelance indexer, Blaxland, NSW) discussed the need for indexers to network, and promote their skills; she provided valuable practical advice to those of us who are freelance, as did Alexandra Nickerson (Indexing Services, Cincinnati, OH, USA) who spoke on medical indexing. Frances Lennie (USA) provided useful information on revisions to existing indexes, web-mounted or in print, using indexing software. Two Victorian freelance indexers also addressed practical issues: Max McMaster spoke on journal indexing and Ann Philpott on the editing process.

Practical guidance for children using indexes was discussed by Anne Bentley (Moonee Ponds, Vic). An indexing outreach program, developed by indexers associated with Editorial Services in Annapolis, Maryland, USA, was described by Nedalina Dineva, on video. This program is geared towards educating middle-school students in the proper use and function of indexes. Janet Hillman (Mimosa Publications, Vic) spoke on the importance of indexes in the marketing of primary school products.

Our librarian delegates dazzled us with up-to-date information on new technologies. Maggie Exon from Curtin University in Perth, WA discussed the concepts of metadata (the word of the moment) and the need for human-centred indexing to provide efficient recall and retrieval of indexing materials on the web. Lloyd Sokvitne (Senior Librarian, State Library, Hobart, Tasmania) summarised current Tasmania Online experiences; this website received the Australian Society of Indexers Web Indexing Prize for 1998. Penny Braybrook (RMIT Publishing, Melbourne Vic) discussed Australian bibliographic database indexing. Two Australian databases were described in detail: Australian Tourism Index by Jane Odgers, and Australian Education Index by Margaret Findlay.

Lynn Farkas reported on two projects conducted by members of the ACT Branch which were funded by grants from the Australian Society of Indexers. One project culminated in the production of a brochure, a Guide to Indexing Services, which was duly launched; the other, a publication in draft stage, a Report and Discussion Paper on Education and Training of Indexing in Australia.

Alan Walker, President of AusSI, presented a paper on indexing school magazines and archives. Alan also chaired the session on Indexing Around the World. John Simkin (freelance indexer and bibliographer, Richmond Vic) described the recent Society of Indexers conference-with-a-difference (Canterbury, 16-18 July): there were distinct Chaucerian themes. Contributions from Britain, the USA, and New Zealand were given by Liz Cook, Frances Lennie and Simon Cauchi respectively. Alan Walker reported on indexing societies

in southern Africa and China — Chinese indexes are in columns and there is conventional order of characters. A number of speakers presented entertaining papers on unusual topics. David Ream (Leverage Technologies, Cleveland, OH, USA) described the creation of a website index to a ten-book mystery series in the USA — the Milan Jakovich novels by Les Roberts. Simon Cauchi (freelance indexer and editor, New Zealand) argued with great humour about the need for an exclusion policy for ‘passing mentions’ — who is OUT and who is IN. Prue Deacon (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra, ACT) discussed the problem of broad queries and narrow queries: can information systems cater for both? Geraldine Triffitt (AIATSIS, ACT) spoke of political problems of choosing indexing terms acceptable to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people for databases and book indexes.

Tasmania was well represented. Robyn Mathison from Hobart reported on a group of enterprising women who have published books with some success and against all odds. Tony Large (freelance indexer, Ulverstone) amused us with the problems of indexing his own book. John Collins (St Helens) spoke passionately on the topic: Is there an Australian publishing industry?

A conference dinner was held during which Roy Harden Jones (Hobart, Tasmania) spoke light-heartedly of indexes worthy of note. Alan Walker presented the 1998 AusSI Web Indexing Prize to Lloyd Sokvitne and Max McMaster presented a certificate to Clodagh Jones whose index to The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin was highly commended in the 1998 AusSI Medal competition. It was a very Tasmanian affair.

The sun shone most of the time, and Hobart was looking pretty for our interstate and overseas visitors. We took over part of Hadleys of Hobart Hotel. There were welcoming and warming fires and comfortable accommodation. The Tasmania Shop provided a table selling Tasmanian-made gifts. Tee-shirts explaining that ‘Life is easier with an Index’ were on sale.

The Australian Society of Indexers thanks all those whose contribution helped to make the conference run smoothly and with success.

Clodagh Jones

### **ACT Report**

ACT and Region Branch President Lyn Farkas talks about the conference:

The whole conference was considered to be very good; the numbers provided an intimate atmosphere and the venue added to the general feel of the event.

In particular all the papers were very good and general comment confirmed that view. The keynote speaker, who is not an indexer, provided a brilliant overview of the ways for the profession to go. The Hypothetical prepared by Anne Philpott was excellent and an invigorating experience for all.

Geraldine Triffitt’s excellent paper on cross-cultural work was considered very timely for our part of the world and was received with great enthusiasm. Socially, members of the Conference could often be found at the Salamanca Markets and the ACT group ‘hosted’ an informal session at Dr Mobbs.

From Barbara Malpass Edwards

### **Victorian report**

Close to 60 registrants and speakers converged on Hadleys Hotel in Hobart to participate in a very stimulating and enjoyable long weekend. The Organising Committee was delighted to welcome delegates from the UK, US and NZ together with members of AusSI from all over Australia. We were especially pleased to meet up with so many Tasmanians interested in indexing and publishing.

Our special thanks go to Clodagh Jones, acting as 'on the spot ambassadress', making sure that all arrangements went along smoothly and introducing some new members to the Society. She, and her fellow Tasmanians, made sure that we all took home not only a very favourable impression of Hobart's restaurants, but also some souvenirs, purchased either from the hotel lobby showcase, the Salamanca Place market or the gift-laden stall brought into the hotel for us by the proprietors of the Tasmania Shop.

Each day's program was full of interesting speakers covering topics such as Indexing from an international perspective; Database indexing; Web indexing; Back of the Book indexing...and more.

Indexing systems were well represented with sessions on Cindex (our official sponsor); SKY Index; DB Textworks; HTML Indexer and MACREX all being covered.

The Keynote Address was given by Robyn Colman of Quill Australia Pty Ltd, who used the delightful title 'Quithering' to discuss the vagaries and delights of writing, publishing and word processing packages.

Throughout the three days of the conference we enjoyed many sumptuous morning and afternoon teas and lunches. After a full day's program on Friday we were treated to an hilarious presentation of a 'hypothetical' session, with Ann Philpott acting out her Geoffrey Robertson alter ego and coercing a number of folk to also take roles as author, editor, publisher, printer and obnoxious son.

Saturday evening's conference dinner saw us all looking very swish as we sat down to dinner in the decorated dining room. Roy Harden Jones was a brief but brilliant dinner speaker, after which the Presentation of Awards took place. The Society's Web Indexing Prize was won by the team of Lloyd Sokvitne, Liz Holliday and Elizabeth Louden for their construction of the website for Tasmania Online. Clodagh Jones was presented with a Highly Commended Certificate for her index to the text 'The journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin July 1858 May 1868' Ed. By Lucy Frost, publ. Univ. of Qld Press, 1998.

Sunday afternoon saw the exodus of the first lot of interstate and international visitors. Some participants took advantage of the mild weather and glorious Tasmanian scenery to extend their stays.

By Jenny Restarick