ANZSI Conference 2005: Engage Enlighten Enrich

by: Kathryn Mercer

As I am relatively new to indexing, the 2005 conference was the first related to indexing I had ever attended. The small number of attendees was a bit of a surprise, but it was good to put faces to names as well as having the opportunity to meet many new people from a wide variety of indexing backgrounds. It also felt a little odd to finally meet the New Zealand Branch president on Australian soil!

I work mainly in the heritage sector, so the wide variety of papers, including many with a historical flavour, was very relevant and much appreciated. Outlined below are the ideas I found most useful and interesting.

The first of these was Prof Neil Archibold's keynote address, giving an intensive and enthusiastic user's perspective. It was great to hear that he believed indexes are 'critical tools for the organised researcher.' In the sciences, a 'glindex' is a most useful tool – a combined glossary and index. He pointed out that using full names is appreciated, particularly by science historians, as are cross references from variations of names and titles: in his research, key figures often have both a Russian and an English version of their name. In an academic setting, research into particular issues occurs globally, and he made a plea for more multilingual indexing to facilitate information sharing and research development. Indexers working with a specialist research audience should ideally know not only their subject area but also which countries are most intensively involved in relevant research, whose researchers may also find the index useful. Hopefully publishers will also take his message on board. As indexers, there could be value in building international links to facilitate indexing in multilingual teams, if we are not multilingual ourselves – food for thought.

It was pleasing to see that many papers were about indexing media other than the usual books and journals. Cheryl Magee and Joann Keogh's paper 'Indexing sound (English and other languages) within

Kathryn Mercer

a multilingual broadcaster' was based on their experiences at SBS Radio, Melbourne. SBS programming is (very) roughly similar to that of government funded Community Radio in New Zealand. I thought the paper would discuss indexing interviews etc, but the collection is primarily music – which as we discovered has challenges enough! The collection is arranged geographically. Even basic information such as identifying which country/language is represented can be perplexing, so indexing is often done in conjunction with the announcers who have familiarity with the language and fonts. A separate collection of production music is used in the background or to introduce segments, to create mood etc, and this has its own index.

An experienced indexer based in the UK, Geraldine Beare gave an interesting account of her experience indexing the illustrations and cartoons in *Punch* magazine and a separate project indexing *Pathe* newsreels. Her contract with *Punch* magazine took her three years around other work, indexing all images including mastheads, resulting in an index with around 250,000 entries in an in-house database. She obviously found the work very stimulating, including not only entry points such as cartoon captions (most had to be abbreviated), but

Deadline for October issue: 30 September
Contributions to <newsletter@aussi.org>

News from Australia & New Zealand

NOTICE OF ANZSI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers will be held on Tuesday 25 October 2005 at 5.30pm at the Friends Room, National Library of Australia, Parkes ACT. A nomination form for Committee positions is available in this newsletter. Please contact the Secretary, Shirley Campbell <secretary@aussi.org> for further details.

NEW ZEALAND

Northern Group of the ANZSI New Zealand Branch presents: The fourth speakers meeting for 2005, a discussion by Peter Nash (Executive Officer of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists) on the Society, with special emphasis on their publications and areas of interest for indexers.

WHEN: Wednesday 7th September, 6 p.m. (with nibbles & refreshments provided from 5.30 p.m.).

WHERE: Room 420, Level 4, Kate Edger Information Commons, University of Auckland, cnr Alfred and Symonds Street.

Location plans:
http://www.information-commons.auckland.ac.nz/?page=location

RSVP to jf.rowan@auckland.ac.nz by Tuesday 6th September, but latecomers welcome - $3 members/$5 non-members.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The next ACT function will be 'A Day in the Life of a Data-Base Indexer' to be held in the Friends' Room, National Library of Australia, on Thursday 29th September, from 5.30 to 7.30 pm.

The panel will be Prue Deacon, Colleen Mock and Penny Whitten, and will be chaired by Lynn Farkas. An email reminder will be sent out closer to the time.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Society of Editors (SA) is holding an indexing workshop - entitled "Indexing in Word", run by Bill Phippard, Registered member of ANZSI.

When: 9.30 am, Saturday October 29
Cost: $50 to members of Soc Eds and ANZSI $100 to non-members
Where: Hands-on at a computer lab at the University of South Australia

For further information: bill@seaview press.com.au

VICTORIA

The Victorian Branch Committee of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers invites you to attend our forthcoming Annual Dinner and AGM.

DATE: Tuesday, 4 October, 2003
TIME: 6:30pm
PLACE: Graduate House, 224 Leicester St, Carlton
COST: $35.00 (includes 2-course meal, wines, soft drinks, fruit juices, tea/coffee)
DRESS: Smart casual

This event provides the opportunity to catch up with friends, other indexers and new members of the society. The short AGM, consisting of the President's and Treasurer's reports and the election of office bearers, will be held during the evening. Cliff Restarick (long-time partner of a dedicated indexer) will deliver the keynote address on 'The Naked Indexer'.

We would also like to take the opportunity to encourage everyone to consider nominating for inclusion on the Branch Committee. Members are always welcome to attend these meetings at any time throughout the year, as fresh ideas are always appreciated. Please contact the Secretary for a nomination form if you wish to nominate for a position on the Committee.

Please RSVP to the Secretary, Karen Gillen, no later than Friday, 23 September. Please let us know of any special dietary considerations when you RSVP. Ph: (03) 9808 1451, Email: karen_gillen@yahoo.com.au

From the literature and other thoughts

Also news.com.au, August 17, 2005

Malmoe Library in southern Sweden ran a 'Living Library' project in which members of the public could 'borrow' a person for a 45-minute conversation in the library's outdoor café to gain insight into their perspectives. Nine people, including a homosexual, an imam, a journalist, a Muslim woman, an animal rights activist and a gypsy were available for loan. The 'items' were paid 'a small sum' for their efforts. [I love the grouping of the journalist with the others whose ideas and lifestyles might be considered unusual to the average Swede! I'd also like to know the other two people whose speciality was not mentioned in the news articles.]

The Invisible Index, with prominent acknowledgment.

When cataloguing last week I noticed the name of an indexer I know in the acknowledgements and went to the back of the book to look at the index. But there was no index! It turns out that the indexer, after seeing the book, told the publisher that this was one of the rare situations in which an index was not needed, and may even have been a liability given the nature of the text. (It was an examination-question style book, in which the things to be indexed would have been the answers to the questions). Since indexers often don't get the acknowledgement they deserve, it's ironic that this non-indexer was credited!

The *Fine Print*/The Publishing Pie

The *Fine Print* is an independent online journal dedicated to editing. Issue Number 2 is available now at the Emend Editing site <http://www.emendediting.com/html/ezine/index.html>. You can subscribe to receive email notification when a new issue has been published. The editorial board includes Pamela Hewitt and Janet Mackenzie, both of whom participated in the combined editors and indexers' conference in Canberra in 2001.

Issue 2 includes articles on grammar, doublespeak about asylum, selling books to writers, the *Macquarie Dictionary*, and becoming a certified editor, along with an interview and a number of book reviews.

An article by Jeremy Fisher on 'The publishing pie' examines the economics of the publishing industry. As with agriculture, it seems that those who create the product (the writers and the farmers) nearly always earn less than those who 'add value' (package and sell it, and even index it - see below). That the bookseller earns about four times as much for selling a book as the author earns for writing it puzzles and dismays me.

Jeremy notes the low incomes of writers, and the difference between mean and median incomes from writing - the mean as an average is inflated by a few very high earners, while the median can be a more representative 'middle' figure. The situation is similar in other creative fields. Anthony Di Paglia has bemoaned the very high payments made to the stars, as this leaves little in the movie-making pie to be shared between the supporting character actors.

The publishing pie has to cover many tasks. The article notes: 'Even the humble indexer may earn more from a book than its author. The Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI) recommends a base rate of $55 (excluding GST) an hour for its members.' I have heard of academic editors (i.e., those who coordinate chapter editors) who were out of pocket from compiling a book, as the indexing and other costs were greater than the royalties they received. (I wonder whether they had read the Society of Author's warnings about low royalties accepted by publish-or-perish-minded academics).

Nonetheless, I find the comparison of writer's earnings with other workers problematic. The valid comparison with the earnings of a business-focussed indexer is a business-focussed writer. Technical writers tend to earn more than indexers, and many writers who respond to commissions, or who identify market niches and work to fill them also do well. The passionately driven novelist who creates a work of value deserves to be well-rewarded, but the self-indulgent writer who creates no product of interest cannot expect to be well-paid. Perhaps we need less writers, so that those who do write, and write well, are in limited supply and able to request decent royalties for the work they've done.

Glenda Browne

INDEXER'S HUMOUR!
Q: How many indexers does it take to screw in a light bulb?
A: None. We are kept in the dark until the last possible moment and then expected to work miracles!

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also literary illusions – sometimes to earlier *Punch* cartoons. A broad general knowledge would have been invaluable in such work. The cartoonist's name was a key index term, but many did not sign their work, some using initials and monograms. Her intensive work meant that she often got to know the style of the various cartoonists. Another issue, due to the long time period covered, was changes of name of both individuals and countries, and here she opted to use the term used in the source material. Providing consistent locators for unnumbered supplements was another challenge.

Pathe news reels were produced between 1917 and 1970, so again the material covered a long period with lots of change. Unfortunately Geraldine was only given 18 months to complete the project, so there was not enough time to view all the films and no cross-references were provided. Consequently, she indexed mostly from a catalogue. However entries were in both UK and USA English, ending up with over 200,000 entries. Some entries involved research, for example references to the Duchess of Kent – which one, and what was her full name?

I am passionate about improving access to ephemera as rich historical source material, so it was with great interest I listened to Clodagh Jones' talk, 'Industrial folk art of apple box labels'. It was soon apparent that she had also caught the ephemera bug! She did not realise what she was getting herself into when she agreed to index the book, 'The art of apple marketing'. The book included 85 pages of text followed by a catalogue of almost 600 labels from across Australia and appendices of artist biographies and lists of printers. Her initial brief was to index the text section only, but as she learned more about the project she persuaded the authors that an index of the full work was vital to its usefulness, not just for information about the apple marketing industry but as documents of the social history of the time – many label images had no apples on them, but showed birds, fashion, transport, etc. She ended up creating several indexes, including brands, artists, printers and exporters, greatly enhancing the usefulness of the work. And what didn't she index? Apple varieties (which surprised me, what with the interest in heritage varieties) and apple grades. Working with two authors sometimes made it difficult to get timely decisions, but the end result was well worth it.

Shauna Hicks, of the Public Records Office of Victoria, gave us an archivist's view on indexing in a session titled 'Indexing archives for access'. Her archives hold 83 km of records, dating from the 1830s and some of the indexes are online <www.prov.vic.gov.au>. She pointed to a lack of standardisation across Australia, including the time periods for which private data is restricted. In her experience, archival terminology is of decreasing importance due to the increasing use of keyword searching by users. Challenges of indexing archives include working with handwritten information, illiterate informants, variant spellings, abbreviations and the Anglicisation of names. Name-identified data has tended to be of most interest to the majority of researchers, but is also the most time-intensive to create. Archival description is often very basic (generally due to time/money constraints); so much of the indexing of records is by the Australian Federation of Family History Organisations, which is working on producing a comprehensive list of indexes. This provides better access to the material for family historians, while generating income for the organisation. A few hardy individuals also index the material and then sell it on, which piqued my interest.

John Simpkin's 'AusSI: aspirations and achievements since 1976' gave an overview of the development of the society – a history he cheerfully admitted was less than dramatic. The 1979 register of work-in-progress sounded like a useful concept.

Few participants appeared to have used Cambridge University Press's (CUP) XML based indexing system and the paper pointed out both the potential from the publisher's perspective as well as the challenges from the indexer's perspective. The lack of standardisation, even within CUP branches, will not help take-up of the system. Indexing happens in a different stage of production, but the process means that the index becomes independent of media or format, as the index can be regenerated when text is altered. So while the index takes 10–200% longer to produce, it also seems to mean that indexers will not get any additional work when reprints in different formats are required. The system of anchor numbers rather than page numbers has some similarities with the system used for producing indexes for the Harper Collins atlases, discussed in the latest edition of the 'Indexer' by Jim Irvine.

As a shopaholic, it was a little frustrating being on Bridge Road (known for factory outlets) without time to visit the shops. Perhaps others felt the same, or there were more non-members at the conference than I had realised, as numbers were considerably thinner for the afternoon AGM. The discussion on the differences in indexing charge-out rates, both within Australia and across the Tasman, was interesting: I wish I had heard this a year ago. Working in a global environment has increasing challenges, with indexers generally not being paid according to the level of skill and knowledge they bring to their work. In the UK environment, the Society publicises a minimum recommended rate, with both page rates

and hourly rates used to price work. There was discussion around charging rates according to the country the publisher is based in, e.g. charging an Indian publisher the Indian rate.

I did not attend the dinner, but judging from the noise when I returned to the hotel after enjoying exploring a little of the central city by tram and foot, it was a fun night. I suspect I wasn't the only one not exactly bouncing out of bed on Saturday morning, although the substantial hotel breakfast washed down with lots of coffee did help to perk me up ready for the 9 am session, 'An electronic cottage industry: Australian input to the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)' presented by Eleanor Whelan. This session was as much about being a person who works from home (complete with the pyjama factor), as the Abstracts and the 'fishnet librarians' who specialise in marine sciences. It was great to hear Whelan's ten steps for success, and her confession of the gap between intention and action. It was nice to know that others find cash flow difficult to predict in this business.

I then swapped sessions in order to listen to the debate about journal indexing, particularly of multi-authored articles, led by Tordis Flath (by then a medal winner) and Max McMaster. It was interesting to see the range of opinions and experiences expressed. It appears that only some journal articles list the primary author of group authored articles first.

Geraldine Suter described perhaps the largest indexing project in Australia: indexing the *Argus* newspaper. Lack of a newspaper index denies the community access to its own history. Recognition of the lack of a published index for a major Australian newspaper has driven the project which aims to publish online. Funding has made a big difference to the speed at which indexing is progressing – approximately one decade of papers indexed every two years. However, this has been at the cost of excluding indexing advertisements, regular sporting fixtures and material covered in government journals from the index. The project involves around 40 people, a mixture of volunteer and paid staff. It acts as both a digest and an index, telling a story in its own right. While some 19th century terminology is incorporated, some 20th century concepts are also included as they are highly researched, eg discrimination. This adds considerable value to the index, as free-text searching will not bring these concepts out. It was a very useful overview of a major heritage indexing project – the model could be adapted for other projects of a similar nature.

On a similar theme, Cheryl Hamblyn (who I'd met a few months before at the Rare Book School lithography course in Dunedin, NZ) and Delysth Sunley discussed the Dunedin Public Libraries' newspaper indexing project. It was clear how much they enjoy their work. The knowledge they have built up of local history through their indexing has made them especially valuable staff in their reference library work. Their paper incorporated a history of how their index came into being, closely tied to the ebbs and flows of New Zealand's interest in its own history. This aspect provided useful context for some of the research I have been doing.

The following two sessions dealt with issues around access to indigenous materials. Nel Fredericks described a project she oversaw at the State Libraries of South Australia to provide more user-friendly access for indigenous Australians to some mission archives relevant to tracing family histories. The focus on the users' existing knowledge, expectations and needs resulted in no *see* references and the 'year' equalling birth date rather than the year of the entry in the register: great to see the users needs being put first. As with the earlier archives session, privacy issues affected coverage. Cross-referencing names to a published book of biographies added additional value to the records, reminding me of a similar practice in some museums.

Dianna McClellen of La Trobe University produced a somewhat overwhelming overview of the rich range of information in various formats collected predominantly by university archaeology and anthropology departments. She described attempts to provide improved and appropriate access to this information for researchers and/or the indigenous peoples themselves. The wide variety of approaches highlighted the lack of standardisation and fragmentation of information – and the need for a guide or overview as attempted in the presentation: Dianna McClellen packed in a lot of information.

I had my flights to catch, so I missed the last session on contentious issues, but I nonetheless left with plenty of food for thought. And weren't those conference tee shirts great?!

Kathryn Mercer, catchwords@clear.net.nz
(Kathryn was awarded the 2005 ANZSI Conference sponsorship)

About Kathryn:

Kathryn's interest in history, archaeology and material culture was stirred in childhood when, digging up the lawn to establish a new vegetable plot, she turned up old broken china and a chamber pot. These interests led to researching early New Zealand scientific communication with the associated challenges of finding relevant materials in museums, archives and libraries. After several years working as a librarian, Kathryn started her own business, called Catchwords, providing research, advice and improved access tools for the heritage sector. Projects thus far have included using the inaugural Nielson Book Data Research Award to investigate retrospective monograph indexing, coordinating some indexing training with a heritage flavour, researching historic sites, advising on the potential future of a Crown Research Institute's image collection and assisting with the digitisation (inc. indexing) of a government department's historic photograph collection.

INDEXING: Engage, Enlighten, Enrich
Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers
Conference, Melbourne, March 18-19, 2005

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A New President for the Society of Indexers

At the 2005 Annual Conference at the University of Exeter, the Society of Indexers welcomed its new President, Professor John Sutherland, and warmly thanked the outgoing President, Maureen MacGlashan, for all her work for the Society during her term of office.

John Sutherland is Lord Northcliffe Emeritus Professor at University College London, and holds a teaching post as Professor of Literature at the California Institute of Technology, where he taught, full time, from 1983 to 1992.

He has published some 21 books (beginning with *Thackeray at Work*, 1974) on a number of topics. His authorized biography of Stephen Spender was published in 2004. A consistent interest is in Victorian fiction, and the publishing thereof. He has edited some 30 Victorian novels, and published, as academics do, in learned journals. As not all academics do, he has published popular books on his subject (the puzzle books beginning with *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?* and *So You Think You Know Jane Austen*). He has also written a weekly column on general affairs for *The Guardian* newspaper over the last half-dozen years. On his retirement from his UCL post in 2004, Professor Sutherland was described as 'a hugely influential figure in the department since the 1960s'.

He has also commented on the importance of indexes. In an article on the professional refereeing of learned journals, 'Who owns John Sutherland?' in the *London Review of Books* (7 January 1999), he commented, 'Journals distribute published research efficiently through an arterial system of subscribing libraries, and for the end-user the contents of the journal are 'free', guaranteed fresh and delivered in timely fashion to his institution's door step. Most important, they have indexes and shelvable back-numbers. This makes for easy retrieval, cross-reference, correction, confirmation, argument and contradiction.'

John Sutherland began his association with the Society of Indexers by presenting the Wheatley Medal for an outstanding index to Hazel K Bell at the Conference (see Press Release of 7/7/05). The Society is delighted that he has accepted its invitation to become the President, and looks forward to working with him over the coming years.

NOMINATION FORM - ELECTIONS

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GPO Box 2069, Canberra ACT 2601
email: aussi@aussi.org
home page: http://www.aussi.org

We, the undersigned members of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers, nominate the person named for the office indicated for the year following the Annual General Meeting for 2005.

Name of person nominated:...

Office (please circle):   President   Vice-President   Secretary   Treasurer   Committee Member

Signature of nominator:..

Signature of seconder:...

Signature of nominee:..

Nominations must reach the following address by 10 October 2005:
Secretary, Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers
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