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SECOND MEETING IN 1981

Wednesday, 19th June, 7.30 p.m.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

From out in the wide world of contract employers, there has been mounting comment about the difficulty of obtaining competent indexers. Are members concerned about this? Constitutionally the Society is committed 'to maintain panels of indexers in all fields, from which authors, editors, publishers and others may be furnished with suitable names' ... Soon after the Society's establishment, a small committee was appointed to work towards this object. In order to discover the sort of work ongoing, indexes were sought from members on either one of two levels: the first from those who may be only beginning and needed comment and assistance with problems encountered. Surprisingly, we understand that the response was minimal.

The second level: for registration, appears to have been confused by hearsay. However, the precepts of our British colleagues have provided guidelines - e.g. that an index should occupy not less than 3½ per cent of the text pages and have some analytical value, indicating awareness of the potential readers' needs for reference. Likewise the Recommendations of BS 3700 (1976) are followed in assessment. Usually two indexes, personally compiled (with their relevant texts) are expected for submission. Referring once again to Constitutional requirements, *quality* of the work has been the prime interest, with the objective of 'improving the standard'. The concept of registration is thus not only for the benefit of the aforesaid authors, editors etc. The very small numbers of active members have so far contributed to the slowness of establishing a list of registered members, but two have recently accepted the President's invitation to join the Panel of Assessors. It is hoped to broaden the subject interests much further, especially in the humanities. The Panel may have been over-conscious of the precept *festina lente*; conversely there may be members too busy indexing to contribute.

The timely comment in the letter that follows is commended for action.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: from D.H. Borchardt, La Trobe University

I read with interest the article by R.D. Croll 'What's an indexer worth' in the December 1980 issue of your *Newsletter*. The salary figures presented are certainly reasonable, if not on the low side. With respect to translators the issue is complicated by the fact that there are a number of people who do translations as a side line and charge less than the rates recommended by Mr Croll. This does not mean necessarily that the translation will be less competently done - on the contrary, the lack of subject knowledge is a common failing among professional translators and is one of the reasons why colleagues with such knowledge and foreign language skills are often asked to make a "rough" or a "quick" translation instead of sending for a "pro". This applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to indexing.

It is all very well that there should be competent and certified indexers, but if they are to have (as they should, indeed) subject expertise as well, the rates of pay suggested are barely enough.

The main burden of my letter is, however, that I am very concerned at the lack of progress the Society has made with a Register of Certified Indexers. The fact is that no progress will be made unless the Society establishes a Register of Foundation Fellows some of whom will thereafter form a certifying committee.

I am not a certified indexer but I have had a lot to do with indexing in the broad sense. I believe I would be able to tell a good indexer from a bad one. There are many senior academics and a few people in the publishing world who can justifiably make similar claims. I would suggest that the Executives of your Society take positive action and invite a panel of 5 - 10 scholars to act as assessors and help establish a basic list of persons who would become Foundation Fellows of the AusSI. An approach to the Australian Academics would surely elicit such a panel of names. After that, a system of accreditation can be developed by calling on the panel of scholars for a few years to help with accreditations until there are, say, 25 or 30 registered indexers from among whom a new Accreditation Board can be formed.

As I have not been conspicuous in my attendances at AusSI meetings, you may consider these suggestions presumptuous or redundant, or both. However, I am genuinely interested in professional indexing and hope you will allow me to make these suggestions.

AUSTRALIAN WINE INDEX

The Australian Wine Index (AWI) was launched, appropriately with a glass of Australian champagne, at the annual meeting of the Society on November 19th, 1980.

AWI is intended to be a co-operative venture involving all persons and organizations interested in bibliographic, factual and numerical data associated with wine assessment.

Initially the Index was created by George Levick, Editor of *Australian Science Index*, by making selections from the data base from 1976 to 1980. At the meeting he described how this had been effected and also his development of a classification and subject index of the items selected. The resulting data base includes 247 items and is available on microfiche.

Mr. Chess Krawczyk of the Canberra College of Technical and Further Education, an authority on Australian wine literature, presented an account of his research on the creation of a bibliography of the Australian monographic and serial literature of the wine industry. In addition Mr. Krawczyk discussed a computer-readable data base that he has developed, comprising the results of wine judgments. He kindly offered to make this available to AWI, together with his bibliographic information.

Representatives of a leading wine producing company who were present at the meeting indicated that the development of an information source along the lines proposed seemed to them to be a very worthwhile project.

Indications of the support since the annual meeting have encouraged the original sponsors in the belief that the production of an Australian Wine Index is a project that should have the support of the many people, both in the Society and in the general community, who are interested in the many aspects of wine-grape culture and of the product of this ancient activity.

Clyde Garrow

George Levick

AN INDEX REVIEWED: by Jean Hagger

Great Operatic Disasters, By Hugh Vickers. London, Macmillan, 1979

It is difficult to decide whether the text or the index of this work makes the more interesting reading and provides a greater challenge to the imagination. Try to imagine the operatic situations which could produce index entries such as these:

Chewing gum, adhesive properties of

Sopranos, disasters involving

Swans, dangerous to tenors

Vesuvius, as opera critic

All these headings are followed by page numbers, as one would expect; but there is one that is not:

Incompetence, better not specified

This speaks volumes...

Every indexer should have this book; no text on indexing provides adequate instruction on how to make indexing such glorious fun.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Australian Dictionary of Biography, C/O Research School of
Social Sciences, Australian National University, PO Box 4,
Canberra. 2600.

Australian Government Publishing Service, PO Box 84, Canberra.
2604. (Mr. Wainwright)

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