

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

NEWSLETTER

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SECOND MEETING IN 1981  
 Wednesday, 17th June, 7.30 p.m.  
 at CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne  
 Committee Room, Third Floor  
 The speaker: KEITH DAVISON, FLA, ALAA;  
 his topic: "DON'T KNOCK THE KWOK"  
 (more information inside the cover)

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DON'T KNOCK THE KWOK

Key Word Out of Context indexing has been disparaged by some as the offspring of a computer marketing manager's brain child named KWIC. For those engaged in the production of large abstracting journals and other documentation with a periodic publication deadline, the hazard of increasing cost and time for indexing has created a corresponding demand for programmed aids to efficiency. KEITH DAVISON, now at the Technilib Library Service Centre, has been long involved in the development of these techniques. A member of the Society of Indexers, he had close associations with the late G.N. Knight; and also worked on IFLA experiments and evaluations. A background of classification principles and traditional book indexing has been combined with extensive interests in computer technology, rotational listings and all. What will result from the union of intellect with intelligence? ? ?

OFFICE BEARERS, 1981

President:	Peter H. Dawe, Chief Librarian, CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne, 3002
Vice-President:	Vera Wicks
Honorary Secretary:	Jennifer Challis
Honorary Treasurer:	Joyce Korn
Committee:	Clyde Garrow, Jean Hagger, John Simkin
<i>Newsletter</i> Editor:	Coryl Muntz

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR THE SOCIETY: G.P.O. Box 1251 L, Elizabeth Street,  
MELBOURNE, Vic., 3001

SALVETE

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr. Brian Bingley; 264 Honeypot Road, Hackham West,  
South Australia. 5163. (Reference Section, State  
Library of South Australia)

Ms. Susan Brookes; Architecture Librarian, Victoria University,  
Wellington, New Zealand.

Mr. M.H. Downer; 18 Nathan Street, Linden. Wellington, New Zealand

Miss Susan Harvey; Commonwealth Regional Resources Information  
System, C/- CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Vic.  
3002.

Mr. G.R.L. Levick; Editor, Australian Science Index, C.I.L.E.S.,  
CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Vic. 3002.

Miss D. Reilly; External Services Librarian, State Library of  
Victoria, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000.

Mrs. E.C. Whitten; Flat 2, 276 Churchill Avenue, Sandy Bay,  
Hobart, Tas. 7005.

COMMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Eugene Garfield is the Founder and Director of the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, which publishes a range of information "tools" in science and technology. These include "Science Citation Index", and "Current Contents" - a collection of facsimile copies of contents pages of the key journals in particular scientific disciplines. Once every two weeks, the indefatigable Dr. Garfield writes an introductory article to each issue of "Current Contents" which he calls Current Comments. One which appeared recently (No. 8, February 23, 1981) was titled "Automatic Indexing and the Linguistics Connection" - an interesting article which suggests that truly effective and economical machine indexing is still some way off. In the course of his article, however, he makes the following comment, which I repeat here for the possible interest and/or debate of our members:

"Before we consider the various linguistic strategies applied to machine indexing, it is useful to describe what human indexing involves. The human indexer analyses the 'natural language' of a document and tries to choose indexing terms that represent its main semantic content. Ideally, this derived 'index language' should provide a description of text content that is so accurate that it is unnecessary for the index user to see the original paper to determine if it is relevant. Susan Artandi,

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, says, "Indexing implies the understanding of the meaning of the text and the ability to make value judgements concerning its information content relative to the perceived interests of the expected information seekers". (Machine indexing: linguistic and semantic implications. *J.Amer. Soc. Inform. Sci.* 27:288-91, 1976)."

Do our members agree that Garfield and/or Artandi *have* described "what human indexing involves"?

P.H. Dawe

COMMENT FROM THE SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

For the benefit of members who may not have seen the current issue of *The Indexer*, (vol. 12 no. 3, April 1981), we copy this letter to The Editor (pp. 129-30)

An indexer's worth

Indexing is commonly paid at about the same hourly rate as proof-reading and copy-editing; for instance, the London Freelance branch of the National Union of Journalists quotes £6- 7 per hour for all three of these activities. This is irrational, for the following reason. All three can, of course, be done either well or badly; but whereas good quality of copy-editing depends on obedience to the rules given in a printer's house style manual, and that of proof reading depends mainly on alertness in spotting every error, however trivial, the art demanded of an indexer is of a high order. It is an art (not a science) in that it depends essentially on making value judgements.

Somewhere between attempting mechanically to index almost every sentence in a text (which is impossible, and would be pointless if it were possible) and the opposite extreme of limiting the index entries to one or two for each chapter of a book or each article in a periodical (which should be called cataloguing rather than indexing), the indexer has to decide, having due regard to the total amount of space allowed him, between those items of information that must necessarily be indexed (or cross-referenced) and those that he must take the responsibility for leaving out.

He must take into account informative, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, technological and other aspects of the text that may be important to readers.

These value judgements can be made only by an individual, human mind, nurtured by wide reading of the subject matter in hand. They cannot be made automatically; for example, by computers, which, not being human, lack common sense and are like the beasts

of the field that have no understanding - however quick and economical they may be for the subsidiary task of discriminating between words and their quasisynonyms (as distinct from between the concepts the words represent) whose overlaps of meaning have already been defined and coded.

On these ground, payment for indexing by the hour is unrealistic (as well as difficult to calculate when subject to interruptions, and unfair to indexers whose skill and experience may enable them to work faster than others). Payment by length of index makes no allowance for deliberate omissions which take skilled judgement. I consider that rational payment should rather be in proportion to the total number of pages of the text that have to be intelligently scanned, understood and *thought about*. My own clients accept this principle.

A publisher unconvinced of the advantage of this method might be persuaded by being supplied with the first draft of an index from which unnecessary references to superfluous page numbers had subsequently been deleted to make room for more useful ones.

J. Edwin Holmstrom  
West Sussex

REPORT OF GENERAL MEETING, 17TH MARCH, 1981

WHAT'S AN INDEXER WORTH? by R.D. Croll

The President, in introducing the speaker, said that the subject is an intractable one, which has been addressed by the English, Canadian and United States societies without any real resolution of principles. Bob Croll had come to grips with it in an intellectually rigorous way and by the end of the meeting he hoped we would be able to take steps towards formulating a policy.

Mr. Croll said that he had been involved indexing in CSIRO and since his retirement had been approached to do freelance work. He had accepted three commissions, two of them before 'What's an Indexer Worth?' was written. One was the transcript of evidence heard by the Public Bodies Review Committee of the Victorian Parliament. He would use this as a case history to test the theses in his paper. The transcript was 2000 pages long and the index needed within a short time. Nothing was found in overseas journals to give guidance on charging, although the Society of Indexers had a recommended hourly minimum rate of £2.50 in 1978 (*The Indexer* vol. 11 no. 2 p. 70)

The problem of fixing reward for human endeavour can be split into three categories; the first a base rate, in the sense of a going market value, not merely subsistence. Secondly, margins for skill, where the nub of the problem is to evaluate the difficulty of the material to be indexed; because possession of background knowledge and the use of it in a particular job are different things. Thirdly, measurement of the rate of reward: this may be based on time or text volume.

Close reference was made throughout to the paper of the same title that was recently published in this *Newsletter* (vol. 4 no. 4 pp. 32-7). The table on page 33 shows annual rates for hourly work under Australian Commonwealth awards for some related occupations; a Scientific Services Officer class 2 receiving \$9.95 an hour, or \$19,153 a year. On page 33, \$10 an hour is recommended for indexers: the Society should adopt a rate and support those who charge it. On pages 34-5 are listed percentage loadings, these bring a self employed person to \$12.40 an hour. A margin for skill must be added, for which it is preferable to consider the difficulty of the job rather than try to assign a specific level of competence to the indexer. Assuming an indexer is competent it is difficult to differentiate one from another except in working speed, subject expertise, the capacity to perceive readily the hierarchy of classification. Basic lists of terminology in various fields make very specialised knowledge unnecessary on the indexer's part, and subject matter expertise can be given undue importance. He had himself been guilty of this, and now wished to qualify the distinction made on pages 36-7 of the paper, between 'simple' and 'complex' indexing; it was wrong to speak of levels of intellectual complexity, because indexing is 5% inspiration and 95% donkey work. Considering what categories are to be named and applying classification concepts is an enjoyable intellectual exercise, but noting page numbers where these appear is sheer grind. Effort could be simplified by using a computer, but manually it is hard work. Members were asked to amend their copies of the *Newsletter* article, substituting 'low density material' for 'simple indexes' and 'high density material' for 'complex indexes'. Density of material was defined as the number of items per page to be recorded.

Rather more than 240 hours of indexing the transcript were logged at just under seven pages of typescript per hour. This is close to the figure of 6½ pages per hour determined for 'complex indexing' by the speaker, Sue Harvey, and George Levick, all experienced CSIRO indexers. In submitting his quote for indexing the 2000 pages (600,000 words) to the Public Bodies Review Committee, he was asked to express it as a total sum, not an hourly rate. Coryl Muntz was also asked to quote in the same manner, and named a figure that was more than twice his own estimate, although near the rate that should be used for complex indexing. He looked only at the sort of headings needed, not allowing for the large number of individual entries per page (an average of 6 to 7½), and was given the job.

The President, inviting discussion from those present, complimented Robert Croll for his splendid contribution and read out a letter from Dietrich Borchardt, commenting on the *Newsletter* article, and comparing the proposed rates with those paid to translators, who charge more if they have subject knowledge; indexers should do likewise. (See *Newsletter* vol. 5 no. 1 pp. 1-2) Peter Dawe went on to mention INTREX, a data base and machine searching device, developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This project was ahead of its time, but one of its aims was to compare indexing by people with and without knowledge of a given subject. It was concluded that indexers in the former category produced better results than those who knew the subject, but lacked indexing knowledge. In

agreeing with this, Mr. Croll commented that intrusion of subject knowledge can handicap both editing and indexing.

George Levick mentioned Fairthorne's Principle, which states that significant words in a passage can be identified by having someone of average schooling underline the ones he does not understand. The speaker replied that most indexers have experienced being asked to work on something about which they know little. If they have any gumption at all, they can learn on the job and do some research on the topic, but they cannot charge for time used in this way.

Peter Dawe and Elizabeth Carvosso drew an analogy with library classification, and with librarians who refer to a catalogue, not relying entirely on their own subject knowledge in responding to enquiries. John Simkin asked what proportion of total indexing time could be spent learning on the job. He was referred to the statement on page 36 of the *Newsletter* article: that no Registered Indexer should be denied access to work in a field new to him. One can make an estimate for a project; to try the same with indexers' competence would be so invidious that it would split the Society and serve no purpose. Prospective employers will want to know who are competent people and what is a reasonable fee.

Peter Dawe said that the way in which Bob Croll has arrived at his figures was quite critical. Reference was again made to the tables on pages 33 and 37, with emphasis on the loadings recommended for self employed people. Purpose of the first was to compare relative levels of competence. Discussion ensued as to whether an indexer should receive the same as a CSIRO Scientific Services Officer class 2, as this is near the salary of a Librarian grade 3: both are considered analogous to indexing. \$10 an hour is a fair base rate. The loading proposed on page 37 of \$1.50 for sick and holiday pay, and \$1.40 for overhead expenses, bring this to \$12.90. An additional \$1 would provide for the long service leave and holiday loadings paid by the employer of salaried staff, and for superannuation and workers' compensation. The hourly rate would be \$13.90.

Peter Dawe asked whether the Society should differentiate between people of more or less experience; could top rate indexers ask for more? George Levick suggested that if the Society promulgates a rate, any individual is free to charge more. Elizabeth Carvosso agreed, saying that a good indexer would do the work in half the time.

The speaker, commenting on the time factor, said he had rejected three jobs, for each of which only a month has been allowed, regardless of the size of the index. He believed there were not many full time indexers in Australia. Most have additional occupations. No indexer should overestimate the significance of his contribution to a production: we should only seek a fair price. He remarked on the lack of knowledge within the Society about who is willing and able to undertake freelance work, and was assured by the President that the Society is indeed addressing itself to this problem. In agreeing with the assertion that a subject specialist does not necessarily make an effective indexer, the meeting was wise not to demure at rating the job, not the worker.

On being asked how he worked out the total time needed for a project, Bob Croll replied that he did not know that density of indexing per page is the basis of this, when he wrote his paper; adding that his estimate for the transcript of evidence had been less realistic than Coryl Muntz's quoted rate of \$3.08 per 1000 words of text. Coryl said that one needs to scan the text before discussing cost; she takes a sample of scattered pages and counts the number of entries. Greitje Croll said that a fast worker can quote a higher hourly rate; this becomes clear as the work proceeds.

In thanking members for their views, the speaker promised to provide his results on the indexing density of the transcript proceedings and a summary of findings. [see the EPILOGUE]

The Vice-President, Vera Wicks, (herself an experienced indexer) spoke on behalf of the Society to express our appreciation for a most interesting meeting. As a recent entrant into the field of freelance work, she was grateful for a well researched basis for quoting. There may be argument on minor points, but the framework of information would be very useful for the future.

#### WHAT'S AN INDEXER WORTH? - EPILOGUE

by R. D. Croll

This supplements the paper published in this *Newsletter*, vol. 4 no. 4 pp. 32-7 (1980), in three ways:

- it records an amended interpretation of the terms "simple" and "complex" that I commended when presenting the paper to the Society on 17 February, 1980.
- it records my experience, since writing the paper, of actually using the data in estimating for a very large indexing task: a transcript of evidence heard by a Victorian Parliamentary Committee.
- it records the conclusions reached by those who attended the discussion on 17 February.

#### "Simple" versus "Complex" indexing

In the original paper I treated the matter of complexity level (see pages 36 & 37) as if it were a matter of intellectual complexity. For estimation and charging purposes in practice this is a misleading approach. *The time taken to make an index is predominantly a function of the density of information worth indexing in the material being indexed.*

*Information density in this connection can be expressed well by the average number of items worth indexing per page of text.*

From an actual case history I presented it was determined that the following figures provide a useful indication of indices of complexity:

<u>Indexing type</u>	<u>Rate of indexing</u>	<u>Information density</u>
Complex indexing	6.5 pages per hour	Average 5-6 indexable items per page
Simple indexing	13 pages per hour	Average 2-3 indexable items per page

Experience from an actual indexing task

The figures presented in the paper were tested on a large project involving 240 odd hours of actual indexing time; the figures for rates of indexing, both relative and absolute, stood up well to the test and I commend them with some confidence.

Conclusions of the meeting on February 17

I found it extremely interesting that, in the discussion after I had presented my paper, agreement of those present was expressed to the following facets:

- that the basic rate of \$10.00 per hour suggested is a reasonable, modal one to adopt for a "Registered Indexer".
- that the overhead loading of \$1.40 per hour also appears reasonable (though it would be expressed more usefully as "14% of the basic rate").
- that the sick/holiday pay loading per hour of \$1.50 (i.e. 15% of the basic rate) should be increased to 25% (\$2.50 per hour) to bring it into line with the equivalent Public Service loading for part-time employees.
- that it is illogical and invidious (also impracticable) to grade indexers, even in respect of possession of specific subject matter expertise; the better (and practicable) approach is to grade material to be indexed as is done in the paper.
- that the Society should (in addition to its current work on development of a "List of Registered Indexers") adopt, promulgate, and maintain a set of current rates for the services of a Registered Indexer.

Summary

In the light of the original paper and this epilogue the revised, commended rates appear as follows:

	<u>Low density material</u> (Average number of indexable items per page up to 3)	<u>High density material</u> (Average number of indexable items per page circa 6)
Base rate per hour	10.00	10.00
Sick/holiday/superannuation pay loading per hour (25% of base rate)	2.50	2.50
Overhead loading per hour (14% of base rate)	1.40	1.40
Total per hour (basic items)	<u>\$13.90</u>	<u>\$13.90</u>
Sustainable "output" (A4 page: 600+ words)	13 pages per hour	6.5 pages per hour
Price per page =	\$1.07	\$2.14
Price per 1000 words =	\$1.80	\$3.60

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On an Index Reviewed (*Newsletter*, December 1980, page 30)

"Victoria the Golden"; by William Strutt, with a narrative by Marjorie Tipping. (Library Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 1980) has in fact, two indexes. The artist's index to the original album is reproduced to make attractive end papers. This is not really applicable to the published version, because of some re-arrangement of the illustrations. A substantial index by Diana Baxter at pages 82 and 83 of the 1980 edition covers not only the sketches and their annotations, but also the introductory narrative. The compiler is acknowledged at the head of the index, while dimensions and design of the book accommodate extensive entries in a multicolumn format over the two pages.

- Josephine McGovern

On Indexing and Assessment (*Newsletter*, March 1981, pages 1-2)

Mr. Borchardt's letter relating to my article "What's an Indexer Worth?" contains three points upon which I should like to comment.

I most cordially agree with his commendation of the rapid establishment of a "Register of Certified Indexers" and to approach it via a Register of Foundation Fellows.

I find myself unable to agree that time can be any analogy in indexing (change what you will) to a "rough" or "quick" translation. An indexer, I contend, must remain a tightly controlled, somewhat

humourless operator at all times - worse luck! That cut-rate work is done is undoubtedly true - but if it is any good only a change of charge is involved.

The third point is the exquisitely debatable one of reward for the possession of subject-matter knowledge. In my paper I recommend that no loading for this factor be contemplated by the Society in adopting a set of rates. The rationale behind this is two-fold: recognition of the fact that there are few indeed who are indexing full-time, and fewer still who can find full-time indexing in their strongest subject (the accent is on versatility); and further, recognition that subject matter knowledge assists primarily in the devising of appropriate terms "higher" than the specific; and that it is surprising how rapidly facility in this can be acquired by an indexer with enthusiasm and energy but lacking subject knowledge in depth.

- R.D. Croll

Comment from a Canadian Connection

... - yes, I do find the *Newsletter* of interest. I was particularly intrigued by reports of the proposed newspaper index which I had seen in AACOBs proceedings and so was most interested by the more extensive account in the *Newsletter*. The IASC Secretary very kindly loaned me a copy of the December 1980 issue in which R.D. Croll's article "What's an Indexer Worth?" appeared and I was particularly interested in the comparisons made, though there are a number of points I disagree with. The IASC, for instance, does have a recommended rate which is cited in "So You Want to Index" (see *AusSI Newsletter*, December, 1980, p. 37 [and this issue, p.18]): depending on the experience of the indexer and the complexity of the work, the IASC recommends an hourly rate of between \$C 10-15.

- Peter E. Greig

RECENT PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

*A Bibliography of Standards Relevant to Indexing and Abstracting and the Presentation of Information*; compiled by Carolyn Robertson. Library Documentation Centre, National Library of Canada. Ottawa, 1980. Based on resources at the Centre, this work lists relevant titles from the following institutions:

American National Standards Institute (ANSI),  
Association française de normalisation (AFNOR),  
British Standards Institution (BSI),  
International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA),  
International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

A subject index refers the inquirer directly to relevant document numbers, and provides excellent access. The material will be reviewed and updated regularly, with applicable Standards from other agencies. The Bibliography may be obtained free of charge, from the Publications Section, Public Relations Office, National Library of Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N4.

*The Directory of Fee-Based Information Services 1980-81*; edited by Kelly Warnken. Information Alternative, Box 657, Woodstock, NY 12498, (\$US6.95). Based on material provided by each individual or company, including information brokers and specialists, freelance librarians and consultants, editors, indexers, institutions that provide information services for a fee. Some 200 services are listed alphabetically under states within USA and provinces of Canada, followed by Australia (alas only two entries), Denmark, England, Iceland, Scotland, Spain. The Directory is enhanced by separate indexes to names, services and subjects. Bi-monthly supplements appear in the Journal of Fee-Based Information Services, from the same source.

From the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada, the IASC : SCAD *Bulletin* vol. 4 no. 1, April 1981. This issue features SO YOU WANT TO INDEX? by Peter E. Greig, to whom we apologise for previous typographic error, when commending this paper to members' attention.

*The Society of Editors Newsletter*, vol. 10 no. 8, April 1981 provides up to date information on recent salary awards achieved by the Australian Journalists' Association for Trainee, Assistant, Book and Senior Editors. Comparable annual scales for journalists (D to A), public service graduates (years 1 to 3), librarians and teachers are listed.

CABLIS, the British Library Current Awareness Bulletin, no. 55 Nov. 1980, reports:

DOCUMATE FOR AUTOMATIC INDEXING An indexing program called Documate, and costing \$50, has been developed by Orthocode Corporation of California for use with the Wordstar word processing program, to produce books and reports complete with indexes. Authors can insert control codes into text; from which Documate will produce a table of contents. A standard program can be used to arrange this sort as an alphabetic index.