

Bolingbroke, Lord, hires Mallet to traduce Pope, 55.
 Bolivar, Simon, 569.
 Bologna, xxvi. 170, 308 n.
 Bolsena, lake of, 163.
 Bonaparte, Lucien, his 'Charlemagne,' 64 n.
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, xxx. 567, 568, 712, 759, 868 n., 869 n., 874. 'The Triptolemus of the British farmer,' 573. His exclamation on the loss of his old guard, 724. His character, 115. 116 n.

Bread-fruit, 577.
 Brennus, 387.
 Brenta, the river, xxiv. 129
 Brentford, 79.
 Brescia, 470.
 Brewster, Sir David, his 'Natural Magic,' 491 n., 748 n. His 'Life of Newton,' 690 n., 718 n. His description of Bishop Berkeley's theory, 724.
 Briareus, 683.
Bride of Abydos; a Turkish Tale, 210. 660 n.

armonious Harry, takes umbrage, 98
 Harrison, Professor Lancelot, 12
 Hartman, Carl, U.S. Zoologist, 67
 Hartog, Dirk, Dutch navigator, early landfall, 48
 hawk, kills rabbit, 193
 hermit crabs, 145
 holes, suction in desert, 180
 Hollanders, early navigators, 48-49
 homestead, architecture, 121, 149
 honey-ants, 13, 172
 hospitality, of bush, 122, 183, 185
 Howards, of Nullagine, 165
 Hunter, Capt. John, colonial governor, 170

DATE OF NEXT MEETING TO BE ADVISED.

Bosquet de Julie, 121 n., 123 n.
 Boswell, 410 n. 'Life of Johnson' quoted, 186 n.
 Bosworth, battle of, xi. n. 3 n.
 'Bosworth Field,' Lord Byron's projected epic entitled, xv. n.
 Botany Bay, 645.
 Bourbon, Duke of, Constable of France, 337, 497, 500.
 Bouts-rimes, 773.
 Boveret, 123 n., 280 n.
 Bowles, Rev. William Lisle, 'the maudlin piece of mournful sonnet' - His 'Spirit of'

Broughton, the regicide, his measurement at Vevay, 121 n.
 Brown, Dr. Thomas, his 'Paradise of Cognettes,' 803.
 Browne, Sir Thomas, his 'Religio Medici' quoted, 212 n. His condemnation on sleep, 651 n.
 Bruce, Abyssinian, his description of a simoon, 199 n.
 Brummell, William, esq., 312 n., 733.
 Brunck, Mr. 22, 193.
 Bruno, Dr. xxx.
 Brunswick, Duke of, his death at

sea, 25
 Hotel, Marble Bar, 162
 grants, shoot small birds, 169
 issance, jewellery, 138
 shooter, 43, 65; dislikes snakes,
 radiates, 99; biggest swag, 110;
 7; disconcerted, 108; dislikes
 "Eastern Staters", 104;
 41
 Richard, 68.
 Romagna, xviii.
 gauge, or modern Greek language, remarks on, with specimens and translations, 104-111.
 of 104. 'War-songs,' 834.
 'Song,' 835. 'Love songs,' 864.
 Roman Catholic religion, 49 n., 813.
 Roman Catholic religion, 49 n., 813.
 of 43
 of 43
 ated to wombat, 185
 burra, blue winged, 90; a grave bird, 165
 burra, laughing, 90, 169
 onalda Station, 182-183
 onasaurus, fossil, 19
 uri Bay, 140
 abillardiere, J. J. H., French navigator, 73
 acepede Islands, 78
 ladies, for hire, 94; for sale, 94; indignant, 179
 lady in our company, 177; in better company, 182
 in previous company, 178; in willy-willy, 114
 est, 38
 103
 on zwageri consociation, 35, 43, 258-9
 C., 145, 162, 164 (Fie

Free will, Sir.15.11-20
 Friends, false, Sir.12.8-18; 37.1-6
 Friends of the king, 1 Macc.2.18
 Friendship, Sir.6.5-17

Galatians, 2 Macc.8.20
 Gallienus, 2 Esd.15.11
 edaliah, 1 Esd.9.22
 ehenna, 2 Esd.7.[70]
 neva Bible, p. xv
 as creator, Sir.39.12-35
 seedher, Tob.13.4
 17 15-24
 synusiae of, 119-21
 succession of, 118, 127
 transpiration of, 115
 see also hemi-epiphytes,
 proto-epiphytes, epiphyllae
 st, A., 269-70, 272-2

Judith, the name, Jdt.8.1
 Justice, God's, Sir.35.12-20
 Kingdom of God, Wis.6.20
 Kittim, 1 Macc.1.1

Lysias, attack by, 1 Macc.3.27-4.35
 Lysias, victory over, 2 Macc.11.1-15
 Lysimachus, Ad.Est.11.1
 Ladder of Tyre, 1 Macc.11.59
 Law, the Mosaic, Sir.3.1-16
 Laziness, Sir.22.1-18
 Letter of Jeremiah, p. 205
 Letters as a form of religious literature, xi-xii
 Leviathan, 2 Esd.6.49-52
 John Hyrcanus, Sir.29.1-13
 Jonathan becomes
 1 Macc.9.23-73

CONTENTS:	PAGE
The Information Management and Consulting Association and Freelance Information Provision - - - - -	42
Fees for Indexers - - - - -	46
New Members - - - - -	50
Reviews - - - - -	51
Book Reviews - Indexes Mentioned - - - - -	52
Alexander Henderson Award 1983 - - - - -	54
Newsletter - February Issue - - - - -	55

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THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING ASSOCIATION AND
FREELANCE INFORMATION PROVISION

The following paper was presented to the Australian Society of Indexers meeting, held on 15th August, 1984.

I would like to cover two topics today : first, to describe the Information Management and Consulting Association (IMCA), what it does and what its members do. And second, to touch on some of the problems of negotiating for contracts and setting fees.

IMCA history

The Association formed late in 1982 after a July meeting of the Victorian Special Libraries group, and partly because of these beginnings has a large proportion of librarians in its membership. It is a national association with over 1000 members, but its executive is Victorian and so far all its meetings have been in Melbourne.

Objectives and activities

It has 5 stated objectives:

1. To support independent information professionals throughout Australia.
One reason for forming the group was the need for moral support from other people in a similar employment position.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange of information.
Our meetings are becoming more focussed on specific topics. In 1983 we were inclined to have general business meetings, but this year we have had speakers at all our general meetings.
3. To co-ordinate interaction and skill sharing between information professionals.
We are trying to become a clearinghouse of information on or for the information professional.
4. To provide a focus for communication and a referral point to and from information professionals.
We published the Information Consultants, Freelancers and Brokers Directory at the end of last year and will be producing the 1985 edition at the end of this year.
5. To set a suggested standard for conduct for the independent information professional.
We are currently hoping to adopt the Institute of Information Scientists Guidelines for Consultants.

That is all pretty general and I would say our Association is still in its formative stages. Perhaps an overview of our membership composition would give a better idea of where we see ourselves.

Membership

One thing you will have noticed is that despite our origins in the library world, we have resolutely avoided the use of the term 'library' in our name and in our statement of objectives. This is because we see our scope as somewhat broader and including, for instance, the subject specialist who searches computerized data bases for clients.

However, we did decide in the middle of last year to become a Special Interest Group of the Library Association of Australia. This gives us a higher profile and greater credibility in the library profession but it means we have two kinds of members:

- those who belong (and pay) via the LAA
- those who belong directly to the Association and pay their membership fees to us.

It is worth noting that all members have equal status and we have no particular qualification requirements. This is essential because of our multi-disciplinary membership, but does give rise to a potential problem in that membership of IMCA is no guarantee of a standard of performance.

However, most of our members belong to a professional association appropriate to their specific activities, and these associations do set standards for membership; and I am personally rather cynical about the extent to which formal qualifications guarantee attitude, integrity or practical ability.

Despite that, as I said, one of our objectives is to set a suggested standard of conduct, and in the fullness of time we may have to set requirements for membership.

Activities of members

It is impossible to give a statistical profile of our members - I am hoping we will be surveying them later to get a more accurate picture of what they are like and what they want from the Association. What I can tell you at the moment is purely the result of 'gut feeling' and observation.

A very high proportion of our members are fully employed and belong just to keep informed. For some, self employment is an attractive idea and belonging to a group like ours lets them know what the water is like without getting wet. For others, it is a matter of keeping in touch because of their job - policy makers and library school staff come in this category.

Some of our members are students, who see freelancing as a possible alternative to unemployment when they finish their courses. This raises the issue of the importance of experience, but I will gloss over that.

In general, our active members are working as 'information managers' charging a fee for their services. They fall into 3 employment categories:

- Salaried people working for an employer who provides commercial services.
- Part-salaried people who freelance in their "spare" time.
- People who support themselves entirely by their freelance activities.

Two problems that seem to crop up in running an association of freelancers are:

- a) it is a highly volatile field. The desires for the independence of self-employment and the security of working for a salary seem to alternate in people. Also, freelancing usually means high exposure to the potential job market, which adds to the volatility.
- b) work pressures dictate association participation. Spending several hours at a business meeting that does not actually increase your earning power costs you money in lost time, and you may have to decide between being unavailable to your client or being an unreliable committee member.

For our members' actual activities we can look at the Directory (samples are available for examination). I make no apologies, as this first edition did at least provide a beginning and we hope the next one will be a lot bigger and better.

That covers IMCA itself. I would now like to mention some of the problems in negotiating for contracts and setting fees.

Negotiating for contracts

Two options are available - you can make it known that you are available for work, or you can actively promote your services.

I would rank the following in the first category:

- advertising your services in appropriate publications;
- ensuring that your services are listed in the appropriate directories;
- referral from your associates when you are better equipped than they are to handle a particular job;
- probably the most important: recommendations and repeat business from your own previous clients.

The more "active" means of acquiring work include:

- submission of tenders in response to advertisements;
- individual publicity material presented in person to potential clients;
- preparation of work that you hope people will buy when complete - at worst, this can provide a sample for demonstration to new contacts.

One of the problems with publicizing your services as a freelancer is the difference most people feel about promoting themselves; it is far easier to be brash and assertive about a parent organization.

Charging for your services

Most people I talked to at yesterday's IMCA meeting seem to charge by the hour rather than piece work rates. You would normally give your client an upper limit before you start, and then send an account at the end of the job. As far as I can find out the going rates are between \$25 and \$75 an hour, but can vary enormously even within the same organization. Some of the factors that cause the rate to vary are:

- The level of expertise required on the part of the freelancer.
- The time involved: generally, rates are higher for a short job, lower for a job spread over a long time and offering security or other benefits.
- The overheads incurred by the freelancer - some of these, such as office expenses and continuing education, must be met from general fees; others, incurred in the course of a particular job (such as online search fees), may be passed on directly to the client.

There are, in addition, occasions when you do not charge for your work. Some examples are:

- if the job to be done requires the freelancer to learn a new skill, the client may facilitate this to their mutual benefit;
- if a preliminary report recommends considerable operational work, the consulting fee to produce the preliminary report may be waived if the freelancer is allocated the project work itself.

I should like to end up by discussing *what* you charge. We don't have an IMCA policy on fee setting, and have not addressed the problem at all as yet. One problem is the great diversity in our members' activities. Another is the fact that, in many cases, IMCA members are competing with free publicly funded services. Our clients may use us because they do not know of the free sources, or, in more cases, because a commercial service provides "added value" such as faster service or results tailored to the requestor's requirements.

What you charge depends in the first instance on your activity, the level of expertise it requires, and its value to the client. Given that your time is probably the major component in the types of activities I am talking about, you have to decide whether to price it as high as the market will bear, as low as you can bear, or at some intermediate level. There are pros and cons to each, and the Small Business Development Corporation's only rule is that you should never go below your short term marginal cost.

If you charge the maximum, you will be being well rewarded for your efforts while working. However, work may not be plentiful, and clients may be fickle and seek a more cost-effective service. If you lower your price after starting at a high rate it looks like failure to your 'public'.

If you charge a standard rate, your services will be used because of their quality. Your clients will be likely to value them and to remain constant to you. Your main problem may be finding out just what the standard rate is!

Finally, the most depressing scenario: charging as little as you can bear. This has some appeal in that, as a freelancer, you presumably enjoy your work and would like to ensure vast quantities of it. There are three serious disadvantages:

- if you raise your fees above the level of inflation, your clients are likely to look for other 'cheap' labour - so you will never escape the initial drudgery;
- your work will be valued at your own valuation of it, which lowers the standing of the profession;
- you will be undercutting people who really are supporting themselves as freelancers.

J. GODDARD

* * * * *

FEES FOR INDEXERS

During recent months the Society has been reviewing the recommended hourly fee chargeable by Society registered indexers, and in this regard has sought comment from members. Extracts from those few responses received are reprinted following this introduction.

In addition, salary scales applicable to indexers employed full-time in both private enterprise and government, and freelance rates offered by publishers and others, have been taken into account.

Unfortunately the information gathered represents an extremely small sample. However, it would appear that qualified indexers in full-time employment earn a salary in the range \$24,000 - \$28,000, whilst their freelance counterparts charge (or are offered) \$10.00 - \$12.00 per hour (equivalent to a full-time salary of approximately \$12,916 - \$15,499).

Consequently the Society has decided to recommend an increase in the freelance rate to \$20.13 per hour (based on a median salary of \$26,000). However, since this rate is unlikely to be immediately acceptable to those who commission indexers, the Society recommends a gradual phasing-in of the rate over a period of three years, during which time the Society will undertake a supportive education campaign.

The recommended freelance hourly rate will therefore become:

from	1 Jan 1985	\$15.00
	1 Jan 1986	\$16.75 *
	1 Jan 1987	\$18.50 *
	1 Jan 1988	\$20.13 *

* plus CPI increases from 1 Jan 1985.

Note particularly that the Society recommended rate per 1000 words has been discontinued.

Comments from Newsletter readers

The following comments consist of extracts from letters received by the Society following our request for views on the question of fees for indexers.

From an employer

"The level of skill we were seeking was equated with an experienced Class I Librarian. A librarian in the upper levels of this grade receives approximately \$9 per hour. A 33% weighting was applied to this to cover contractors overheads giving \$12 per hour as an appropriate payment level.

The work offered is indexing periodical articles for inclusion in a machine readable database. My own experience is that it takes about 20 minutes to index one item. On this basis two rates of pay were determined, \$6 per indexed sheet for batches of material involving comparatively little fruitless searching and \$12 per indexed sheet for material with a lower indexing to searching ratio. I believe that the various indexers involved have found these rates acceptable."

From Freelancers and Members

"I have been working as a freelance indexer for the past 5-6 years...

For the past two years I have been charging \$12 per hour for general material and \$16 for particularly difficult or technical material. These rates are also used by a Freelance Service which gives me a small amount of indexing work. I am certainly not interested in working below these levels.

I suspect other indexers are charging less than these rates as several promising inquiries recently have not eventuated in work. In several instances the inquirer has said he is speaking to other indexers and I know that some others who have been approached have been considerably less experienced than I am and probably would not get the work unless their rate was cheaper.

I think the Society should publish rates, preferably in both per hour and per word terms, and that Registered Indexers should be obliged to use these rates as a minimum. Extra charges could be added for particularly difficult work, urgent work, foreign languages or other

special considerations."

"I was most interested in your appeal for comment on FEES FOR INDEXERS in the May 1984 issue of the *Newsletter*: not so much because I have anything particularly fascinating to contribute myself but because I'm so looking forward to seeing what other indexers have to say and how their experiences compare with mine.

The questions asked, in order to stimulate response, show a realistic awareness of what's going on. Personally, I do always try to charge for indexing, as a matter of principle, so as not to feel I'm taking the bread from the mouths of other indigent indexers. But each index I've done has turned out to be *sui generis*. For the first for which I was paid, I was bluntly told there was such an amount left from the grant for publication. At another extreme, I quoted a price based on the number of words intended by the publisher for the volume and an information density which I pretended was minimum because I'd never indexed a work of that kind before; ironically, by the time the page proofs came, I had gained relevant experience elsewhere and found I was asking to be grossly underpaid: \$130 for 148 hours work on copy that was barely legible in places, within truly wretched time and space constraints for the sort of detailed indexing required (rightly) by the author.

In a recent effort, I toyed with the idea of charge by information density (extreme and difficult) but the sum I arrived at seemed excessive, so I settled for \$6.00 per hour. My most recent experience suggests that publishers/editors don't find this excessive.

In my limited other experience I've had the impression that publishers/authors/entrepreneurs aren't willing to come to terms with the information-density idea, being much more oriented towards appreciation of time spent. But I've also found that in some cases the most realistic basis for negotiation is simply to ask how much money they have (left) for the index and claim that, however risible. Hardly any of the bodies concerned are profit-making entities and, as a result, I've never felt I really received anything like the proper fee for the job. I worry that I'm somehow letting down the Society in its attempts to reach a "recommended minimum fee for contract indexing". On the other hand, if one believes in indexes and enjoys making them, perhaps one should apply the hedonist principles and expect to pay for one's pleasures.

Is there some accepted way of performing word counts? It's all very well if the publisher knows and names the length of a work in words but, when I've counted the content of a couple of typical pages of the text and extrapolated, I've had constant doubts about my procedure. How does one account for initials, abbreviations, hyphenated words, strings of numerals as components of bibliographical citations? Should one omit articles and prepositions? Do publishers themselves have some sort of agreed formula that we could adopt? Should one consider a special loading for books of mixed authorship (Festschriften, etc.)? The variant vocabularies of the contributors can make such works more like serials from the indexer's choice-of-heading point of view. Naturally the sort of formula I'd like would be one that could be operated very easily and rapidly.

Judging from the literature of book indexing, it's nothing but a truism that publishers, even established ones that should know better, rarely leave enough time, space or money for the sort of indexes they want; but those that do have a weakness for them should certainly be encouraged to sustain it. It would be awful if they decided against in particular cases because they considered an indexer, however backed by pronouncements of the Australian Society of Indexers, was making exorbitant demands. But maybe it would sometimes help here if one could say: that's what they're paying without a whimper in Melbourne!"

"Your pathetic plea for response to 'fees for indexers' prompts me to air the views!

Personally, I think this more than vexed question will never be satisfactorily determined mainly because each Index has to be individually considered and 'Hidden Costs' may not be known until one has reached the end.

Lately, my experience has been that a set sum has been offered and one either takes it or leaves it....

My experience lately has also been that when asked to index a book for an academic a fixed sum is mentioned as being within the prescribed budget of the particular University faculty. It does not help either when having agreed to the sum, later one is asked how much the Indexer will charge!

I find it impossible to reach any fair assessment of work on a book index, especially when, as an Historian, I often have to act as proof reader, corrector of errors, hold long conversations per telephone, etc. - if on an hourly rate instead of a fixed sum, this no doubt would price the Indexer out of the market and also lengthens the time for completing the index.

Another point is that [one] University whips off the Tax when payment is made thus making the Indexer an 'employee' which we are certainly not especially when one has not been 'engaged' by them initially. Publishers in general do not do this I have found.

In reply to the question in Newsletter Vol.8, No.2 "Does anyone actually use these recommended figures?" No, this one never has.

One other point: with the current trend of (seemingly) taking the initiative from writers, indexers and speakers, how is an indexer able to do a competent job when he-she is told that that heading or that word is not allowable? Is this not undermining the professionalism of indexing?

Dry those tears - this is my reply though tardy."

"Although this is a rather tardy response to the request in the May Newsletter for comments on the question of fees for indexers, I would like to contribute the following.

The Society's original recommendation on fees was based on the paper by R.D. Croll, with subsequent amendments, and general discussion. (Newsletters December 1980 and June 1981). The emphasis in the paper was on the time taken to index 1000 words, varying according to the information density or complexity of the work being indexed. No mention was made of checking and typing, and what proportion of the time taken should be allotted to these items. In some cases, I have found that the latter can take almost as much time as the actual indexing.

The second point I would like to make is concerned with the recommended minimum rate which is for works of low information density, or simple indexing. During the course of the recent National Book Council seminar on "The book: from writer to reader", mention was made of the use of a word processor to produce the index in cases where the book in question was of a straightforward character. This would appear to indicate that the tendency will be for publishers not to use freelance indexers in cases of simple indexes, and therefore the minimum rate recommended by the Society should perhaps be raised to apply to works of medium information density instead of low."

* * * * *

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:-

Mr J. Gamble	Wat Buddha Dhamma, 10 Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, N.S.W. 2255
Mrs A Harris	3/23 Fallon Street, Caulfield Sth. Vic. 3162
Mr F. Hutchinson	P.O. Box 218, Carlton South. Vic. 3053
Ms D. Jones	40 Standen Street, Karoro, Wellington. New Zealand
Mr T. McKeown	P.O. Box 277, Woden. A.C.T. 2606
Ms S. McNair	18 Francis Street, West Heidelberg. Vic. 3081
Mr M. Middleton	School of Librarianship, University of N.S.W. P.O. Box 1 Kensington. N.S.W. 2033
Mrs R. Perini	15 Chelmsford Avenue, Epping. N.S.W. 2121
Miss L. Steel	44/22 Mosman Street, Mosman. N.S.W. 2088
Mrs. G. Suter	41 Lothian Street, North Melbourne. Vic. 3051
Ms M. Turner	5/3 Trafalgor Place,
Mr D. Vaughan	P.O. Box 90, Elsternwick, Vic. 3185
Mrs A.T. Walsh	36 Emu Street, Enfield. N.S.W. 2136
Dr E. Wood-Ellem	28 View Street, Alphington. Vic. 3078
Ms C. Winning	33 Park Avenue, Neutral Bay. N.S.W. 2089

REVIEWS

Who is who in classification and indexing

This is a directory to approximately 700 persons from 45 countries who profess to have an interest in classification and indexing. It has been produced by the International Federation for Documentation, Committee on Classification Research.

With information gleaned from a variety of sources, this book has been conscientiously put together. However, it suffers from the same defects as all directories, namely that it is out of date before it is published, it is not comprehensive and it makes no attempt at "quality control".

The book aims to provide a means of enabling people to locate and contact colleagues with similar interests. Each person listed gives the usual name and address details followed by subject specialities, books or articles published, and memberships of societies. And it was from these societies which most of the material was obtained.

Thus there is a range of interests mentioned from classification of cervical cells, to classification of archaeological sites, to information retrieval of maps, to classification of psychological disorders to biological taxonomy to theoretical work on classification systems. Similarly the range of people mentioned is wide from those who state that they have indexed one book to Derek Austin. The entries are arranged by country and, according to the pecking order of entries per country, the United States tops the list, with 160 entries, need I say more! Australia with 12 entries comes 11th, just ahead of Austria and Argentina.

The book is arranged by country, when to achieve its objective of enabling like minded people to contact each other, I would have thought it more sensible to organize the book by broad subject interests. The worst part of the book is the indexes. Subject interests are listed in each entry by the new Information Coding Classification (ICC). Thus to identify a subject interest there are five options (1) survey of the subject areas and subject groups of ICC, (2) survey in matrix form of ICC, (3) survey of the subject groups and their subject fields of ICC, (4) ICC Index and (5) Subject Index. As well as these there is a country index, despite the fact that it is arranged by country, and a name index. This is indeed thorough indexing!

As with most directories there is some value in this publication. But it lacks flexibility and purpose, problems which should not arise in this day of modern technology.

S. HARVEY

BOOK REVIEWS - INDEXES MENTIONED

SMALLWOOD, Carol. *Exceptional free library resource materials.* Libraries Unlimited. Reviewed by David Jones, *Incite*, Vol. 5, No.18, 2 November 1984.

"... there is no subject index."

BATY, Scott. *Ships that passed.* Reed. Reviewed by David Jones, *Incite*, Vol. 5, No.18, 2 November 1984.

"... and don't expect too much from the index, which, alas, refers only to the ships which are dealt with in detail."

D'ABRERA, Bernard. *A field guide to the butterflies of Australia and New Zealand.* Five Mile Press. Reviewed by Max Marginson, *Australian book review*, No.63, August 1984.

"There is information about their habits and habitats but no index or key - an odd omission to this reader's way of thinking. Perhaps butterflies cannot be readily keyed out but they can certainly be indexed. It reminds me of some fish books which I have seen in which you have to look at every page to find what you are after. The one thing that can be said in its favour is that it certainly makes you look at the range of types."

LOVE, Peter. *Labour and the money power.* Melbourne University Press. Reviewed by L.F. Crisp, *The Age*, 25 August 1984.

"A second edition should afford the author a welcome opportunity...to make good the absence of some of the *dramatis personae* from the index."

HUTCHINSON, Garrie. *From the outer : watching football in the 80s.* Penguin. Reviewed by Mike Fitzpatrick, *Australian book review*, No.64, September 1984.

"... a beefier index would help. One could then more easily locate the appropriate passage for a friend or a memory."

BRASCH, R. *Strange customs.* Fontana. Reviewed by Vida Horn, *Australian book review*, No.64, September 1984.

"There is an index...a welcome improvement on the previous volume in the series."

HARMAN, Elizabeth J. and Brian W. Head. *State, capital and resources in the north and west of Australia.* University of Western Australia Press. Reviewed by Ken Wilson, *Australian book review*, No.64, September 1984.

"... well indexed."

BRYANT, Arthur. *Set in a silver sea : the island peoples from the earliest times to the fifteenth century.* Collins. Reviewed by Stephen Hollings, *The Australian*, 15-16 September 1984.

"There is an excellent index for finding persons, places and subjects."

HOWSON, Peter. *The Howson diaries*, edited by Don Aitken. Viking Press. Reviewed by Paul Kelly, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 1984.

"There are gems in this book, but they are buried beneath tiresome events and meetings of no consequence. It is a book for students and the political cognoscenti, a big number of whom feature in it (just check the 24-page name index)...

"The moves to depose Gorton bring Howson into close contact with the heavies of the press gallery. Indeed, Alan Reid has an index entry as long as that of Menzies."

DURDEN-SMITH, Jo and Diane De Simone. *Sex and the brain*. Pan. Reviewed by Tess Van Sommers, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1984.

"Surprisingly, there is an index and an impressive bibliography and notes section. These imply a respect for the reader that is not always borne out elsewhere, as for instance in a mawkish section that describes the differing physiological reactions of a man and woman who meet at a party and soon afterwards end up very explicitly in bed together."

BUDDEE, Paul. *Fate of the Artful Dodger: Parkhurst boys transported to Australia and New Zealand 1842-1852*. St. George Books. Reviewed by Leonard Ward, *Canberra Times*, 28 July 1984.

"The main narrative also is accompanied by copious notes, an excellent bibliography, and is well indexed."

LE MESURIER, John. *A jobbing actor*. Elm Tree Books. Reviewed by Hope Hewitt, *Canberra Times*, 28 July 1984.

"The only other wish I felt in closing this record of one who made us laugh in unlaughable circumstances was for an index. There is so much here that future theatre historians should be able to put their hands on quickly, but they will have to delve for themselves."

CLYNE, Densey. *More wildlife in the suburbs*. Angus & Robertson. Reviewed by John Taylor, *The Australian*, 6-7 October 1984.

"The book...is handsomely produced, indexed..."

COLEMAN, Ray. *John Winston Lennon, Volume 1, 1940-1966*. Sidgwick & Jackson. Reviewed by Craig McGregor, *The Age*, 13 October 1984.

"... a good index."

VAILLANT, George E. *The natural history of alcoholism*. Harvard University Press. Reviewed by Ross Fitzgerald, *The Age*, 29 September 1984.

"Well indexed."

COLLINS *Australian encyclopaedia*. Edited by John Shaw. Collins. Reviewed by John Taylor, *The Australian*, 13-14 October 1984.

"Its chief defect is the lack of a general index. This is no doubt inevitable since it is more or less compulsory these days to have a subject index, and providing both belt and braces is an expensive operation. The subject index is a good one, but I'm not sure that it doesn't make too many demands on the linguistic skills of younger users."

If you want to know about Money, you will find it under Currency. Naturally, that comes under Commerce and Industry and how do you find your way there? By guessing, I'm afraid. There is no index to the subject index.

There is a point beyond which even an encyclopaedist can't be expected to hold everybody's hand, but a follow-the-lights system can work perfectly only if everybody knows where the entrance is, or if there are lots of entrances.

However, most entries are easily found by simple alphabetical search, and there is plenty of cross-referencing. Once found, the entries are mostly well planned and presented."

DISABILITY aids directory. Mount Eagle Publications. Reviewed by David Jones, *Incite*, 17 August 1984.

"Entries are arranged in broad groups - building fixtures, communications, clinical and therapeutic aids, and so on - to which the user is guided by a products index which is really very good."

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THE TENTH ALEXANDER HENDERSON AWARD - 1983

This award is an annual presentation to an author or authors who, in the opinion of the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies, produces the best family history published in Australia and which has been submitted for the award. The full judges' report is contained in Vol. IV No.6 June 1984 of *The Genealogist* but it is interesting to note here that one of the main technical criticisms was the failure of some authors to include indexes. The Report states that "in the opinion of the judges, it is a cardinal sin for any non-fiction work to lack an index and one is particularly necessary in a genealogical volume."

Specific comments concerning indexes or the lack of them in submissions are as follows:

Michell, Elyne. *Chauvel Country*.

"It has my major requirement for an excellent index."

Wightman, Frederick W. *Dramatic facts of a family history, 1599-1976*.

"Regrettably it lacks an index."

Reynolds, Graeme. *Caprice of Jersey : The Rainy Family in Jersey, England and Australia*.

"... it cries out for an index."

Perry, Joan T. *Our forefathers : Book 1 The Piper-Pieper Family*.

"... it sadly lacks an index."

Mellefont, Arthur Victor. *Malenfant families*.

"The index is extremely well done."

Colliver, Helen. *Freedom found : a history of the Altus Family in Australia*. [Alexander Henderson Award Winner for 1983]

"This book has....that crowning glory - an excellent index."

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