

FEBRUARY 1985

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INDEX.

- Bread-fruit, 577.
Brennus, 387.
Brenta, the river, xxiv. 129
Brenford, 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
 arrison, Professor Lancelot, 12
 artman, Carl, U.S. Zoologist, 67
 artog, Dirk, Dutch navigator, early landfall, 48
 awk, 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

. sea, 25
+ Hotel, Marble Bar, 169
erants, shoot small birds, 169
... issance, jewellery, 138
- shooter, 43; 65; dislikes snakes,
raduates, 99; biggest swag, 110;
7; disconcerted, 108; dislikes
+ "Eastern Staters", 104;

41

Broughton, the regicide, his measurement at Vaux, 121 n.
Brown, Dr. Thomas, his 'Paradise of Connoisseurs,' 803.
Browne, Sir Thomas, his 'Religio Medici' quoted, 212 n. His contention 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.
Bunsford, Duke of, his death at ... Grace 114.

Galatians, 2 Macc.8.20
 Gallienus, 2 Esd.15.11
 gadiah, 1 Esd.9.22
 gehenna, 2 Esd.7.[70]
 Geneva Bible, p. xv
 God as creator, Sir.39.12-35
 seeds of, Tob.13.4
 synusia of, 17 15-24
 succession of, 119-21
 transpiration of, 118, 127
 see also hemi-epiphytes,
 proto-epiphytes, epiphylla-
 st, A., 269-70, 272-2
 t, A., Bern.

John Hyrcanus, Sir. 29.1-13
Jonathan becomes
1 Macc. 9.23-73 and the Apocrypha, p. xvii

- See Jacalva - His sense
 on visiting the Vatican
 His character of Michael
 of, 43
 - to wombat, 185
 - aburra, blue winged, 90; a grave
 - aburra, laughing, 90, 169
 - onalda Station, 182-183
 - onosaurus, fossil, 19
 - uri Bay, 140

- related to wombat, 185
- kurra, blue winged, 90; a grave bird, 165
- kurra, laughing, 90, 169
- Ronalds Station, 182-183
- monosaurus*, fossil, 19
- uri Bay, 140
- igator, 73

Labillardiere, J. J. H., French navigator, 73
Lacepede 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

Forest, Australian, 369, 370
on *Zwageri* consociation, 35, 43, 258-9
C., 145, 162, 164 (Fig. 22)

CONTENTS :	PAGE
A Writer's View of Indexing by Susan Priestley	2
Annual General Meeting	
Report from President	5
Statement of Income & Expenditure 1984	7
Australian Society of Indexers' Membership - February 1985	9
Australian Society of Indexers Medal	14
New Members	6
Book Reviews - Indexes Mentioned	12
Notes and News	15

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A WRITER'S VIEW OF INDEXING

In the following paper, Susan Priestley discusses indexing from the perspective of the author. Her paper is based on a talk she presented at the AusSI seminar, 'Indexing: issues facing today's indexer', held in Melbourne on November 1984.

From the outset, I warn you that this will be a highly personalised account of indexing, with a quite self-indulgent and narrow perspective. However, I trust that you as professional indexers will be able to suitably weigh the relevance of what I have to say when applied to other areas of writing with which you are familiar.

I began writing in the mid-sixties. The first two books were local histories of Echuca and Warracknabeal. They were published in 1965 and 1967 by Jacaranda Press just before and just after it was taken over by larger publishing concerns.

The third book was a local history of the Mulgrave Shire, later renamed Waverley. It did not appear until 1979 and, during the intervening twelve years, the publishing business had drastically altered its shape. For this book, the choice of John Ferguson of Sydney as the publisher was in fact incidental to the selection of Brown, Prior and Anderson as printers. Anderson was a staunch citizen of Waverley and their printing works were just across the border in Burwood. Anderson, at our request for full publishing facilities, sought out Frank Eyre, who was then an independent freelance editor following his years with Oxford University Press. Anderson and Eyre, I gather, together sought out John Ferguson.

Four years later, in 1983, the history of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) was published by Macmillan and *The Victorians*, one volume of which was my work, has been published very recently. In this case, the publishers were a newly-formed joint venture of Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, which is composed of the newspaper firms of David Syme & Co. and John Fairfax & Sons and a modern 'with-it' book-marketing entrepreneur, Kevin Weldon.

As you will recognize, my books have brought me into brief associations with a widely varying range of publishers. But I should point out that all the work I have done so far has been as a writer commissioned to produce a manuscript. As such I have had only a minor influence on the publishing contract, which has been made between the publishing firm and the commissioning body - that is, the local councils, the RACV and, in the case of *The Victorians*, our management committee acting as the agents for the Victorian Government. However, in all cases except one, working contact between the publishers and myself during the actual production of the book has been quite close.

As a writer of histories, which are mostly local in character, I have shared with all the publishers the firm conviction that indexes are an essential component of the published product. For the successful marketing of the book, particularly in the area to which it refers, publishers well recognise the value of recording in the index family and place names,

if nothing else. The prospective buyer flicking through the book is reputedly influenced firstly by its visual appearance, especially the illustrations, and secondly by the recognition of familiar names in the index.

That said, I'll survey the various indexes that have appeared in my books.

The two histories published in the 1960s have, from the writer's point of view, quite reasonable indexes. As far as I am aware they were produced by members of the editorial staff of Jacaranda Press, or perhaps contracted out by them. But since I was not a party to the publishing contract, I am not aware of how payment was made for the indexing, if indeed that was a separate charge from the general publishing fee.

I am confident however that the decision to have a good index was made by Jacaranda's Chief Editor in 1964, Gwyn James. He had not only had a distinguished career as a publisher, but was himself an historian of some note, being the editor of Alfred Joyce's letters, *A homestead history*, and later *Old Walhalla*, a collection of late nineteenth-century photographs. Incidentally, he also edited my *Echuca* manuscript, often as I sat across the desk from him, and I owe him a great debt for instructing me in some of the finer points of good writing. He was and remains an enthusiast for the finest standards of book production and Australian publishing suffered a great loss when he retired from the industry.

I have diverted into this tribute to Gwyn because I am sure that it was his influence which ensured the presence of an index to *Echuca* in the first place, and a good quality one at that. Although he had already resigned from Jacaranda when the time came for publishing *Warracknabeal*, something of his influence remained with the editorial staff. My contact with them was more distant than with *Echuca* but the resultant product, including index, was of good quality.

With the Waverley history, Frank Eyre's editing and participation in choosing illustrations and overseeing the general book design was both meticulous and imaginative. I was therefore a little surprised when he called one day to say the page proofs were ready. Could I have them checked in about four days time, and could I prepare the index as I was going through? As I knew the manuscript fairly well, it would probably be fairly easy, wouldn't it? My initial startled reaction subsided a little and, yes, I supposed it would be fairly easy. When I had fully recovered I thought 'Good. I can put in all those subject references for which I search in other published material when I am doing my own research'.

And here I might divert into the obverse side of my experience with indexes. As a convicted and convinced user of published material, I always look for indexes after scanning a book's chapter and section headings and the contents list. When an index does not exist, I am exasperated. Where it does exist, but does not include the category or subject in which I am interested, I am irritated, probably beyond reason. These faulty indexes - or faulty as far as I am concerned - are often those which concentrate heavily, if not entirely, on place and personal names. In order to sniff out the subject matter I am after, I must then think up a possible person or place association and look up all the references under them. When this means time-consuming skim-reading, sometimes of the major part of the book, my frustration rises. The frustration on bad days can become quite firey. You may never have realised when looking across a library full of industrious readers that there is such a boiling mass of

passion barely contained under the surface. On the one hand, the Great Australian Novel may yet have its origins there. Alternatively, you as indexers could campaign for higher and wider standards of indexing and improve the general mental health of the nation.

To return to the Waverley index. I set about it with the best will in the world and found it quite difficult and confusing. However, as it was inconceivable that there should be no index to the history, I waded through setting it out on a series of small cards. From these, the printers set straight into type, including all my typographical inconsistencies - mixtures of upper and lower cases, funny indentations, the lot. When I got the proofs back, it was again a rush job, and I did as many corrections as came immediately in sight, but plenty remained uncorrected. Moreover, I failed to check that all the cards had actually been typeset. So some of the entries simply do not appear including, to my embarrassment, the names of some notable citizens and also Monash University. These were grave slights to many potential buyers.

Users of the Waverley history have included growing numbers of school students studying their local area. Recently local librarians became so frustrated with my index that they began preparing a much fuller one which is now completed and is available for consultation at all branches of the Camberwell/Waverley Library.

With the RACV history, I had virtually no contact with Macmillan after handing over the manuscript. I did see the galley proofs but not the page proofs since I found to my astonishment that it is not Macmillan's policy to have authors see page proofs. Therefore I had nothing to do with choosing or captioning illustrations, with the general editing or with the index. I say this to you because some appalling blunders occur in several areas of the book including the misplacement of one paragraph of the text. Never again shall I pass by the opportunity to have as close a connection with the publishing process as I can. And this now includes an interest in the index - even if I have to pay for it.

For *The Victorians*, we were warned by the publishers that the preparation of the index was our responsibility, in addition to general editing of the text. This is, I think, somewhat unusual in publishing circles - at least as far as the general editing is concerned. But since the publishers were willing to produce a quality product at a very low price so that it would be available to as many people as possible, the management committee manipulated the budget to accommodate these costs.

At the same time, all of us thought it essential to have a good index. Through your Society we made good contacts who were able to produce the required full indexes in quite tight time schedules. I was therefore delighted when John Hirst, who reviewed my book in *The Age*, thought that it was too densely packed with information for reading right through (unless you were Barry Jones) but that most people would find ready access to parts that interested them through the excellent index. And that, of course, was prepared by your current President, Jean Hagger.

It's a compliment I would personally like indexers to take to heart. More and more people are finding your work of great value and I wish you well in extending your profession and raising its standards.

REPORT FROM PRESIDENT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 13 FEBRUARY 1985

The Australian Society of Indexers was established in 1976, after the winding-up of the Society of Indexers in Australia, an organisation which owed its existence to the dedication of the late Godfrey Green. There were 47 foundation members of AusSI, of whom twenty-seven are still members. Present membership is 135, with members in the various states as follows:

A.C.T.	13	Tas.	5
N.S.W.	23	Qld	5
S.A.	4	Vic.	82

There are three members in New Zealand. As would be expected from the distribution of the membership, most of the Society's activities take place in Victoria. However, efforts are being made to bring together members in places other than Melbourne; due mainly to the efforts of Alan Walker, a group has begun to meet in Sydney.

The *Newsletter* has continued to serve as the main means of keeping the wide-flung membership in touch with both the Society's activities and with recent developments in indexing. Four issues appeared in 1984 and the Society is indebted to John Thawley for his services as Editor.

The quarterly meetings in 1984 covered a range of topics of concern to indexers. Pam Trier spoke about the work of the Standing Committee for the Book Trade; Jeremy Fisher described his experiences as the indexer of *The Australian encyclopaedia*; and Jennifer Goddard told of the activities of the Information Management and Consulting Association. As its fourth meeting for the year, the Society conducted a one-day workshop, with the theme 'Issues facing today's indexers'. This was well attended, participants coming from not only Victoria but also A.C.T., N.S.W. and Queensland. Organization of the workshop was undertaken by Sue Harvey and Stephen Lansdown and the Society is grateful to them, and to the interesting panel of speakers, for the presentation of what was undoubtedly a useful and pleasant event for members.

A short course in indexing was offered in June/July 1984 but there was not sufficient response to warrant its being conducted. A more promising response has been made to a course proposed for February/March 1985.

The program of registration of indexers has developed a notable momentum during 1984. There are now twenty-four Registered Indexers, making it much easier for the Society to meet requests from publishers and authors for information about suitable indexers for specific commissions.

The Society is constantly aware of the need to raise the status of indexers and indexing. Much attention has been given by the Committee to the matter of taking a stand on a reasonable fee for indexing and the November *Newsletter* contained a statement which should be of assistance to all indexers. A submission was made to the International Standards Organisation for consideration in the preparation of its Draft Standard on Indexing.

To enhance further the image of indexing and indexers, the Society decided to offer an annual award for an outstanding index. The first Australian Society of Indexers Medal will be awarded during 1985.

Without a doubt, the Society does seem to be making its presence felt in those areas where it should be making a relevant contribution. With more active participation in its programs by its members, it should continue to grow in importance and, more especially, in interest to all associated with indexing.

JEAN HAGGER

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

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Mrs. K. Rogers	Night Owl Publishers P.O. Box 764 Shepparton, Vic. 3630
Miss S. Ross	4/587 Glenferrie Road Hawthorn, Vic. 3122
Mr. K. Siebel	2/1683 Pacific Highway Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
JANUARY - DECEMBER 1984

<u>Expenditure</u>		\$	<u>Income</u>	\$
AACOBs Membership		33.00	Membership subscriptions	1,965.00
Affiliation fee to Society of Indexers		74.50	Registration fees	180.00
The <i>Indexer</i> subscriptions		695.08	<i>Newsletter</i>	
National Book Council membership		35.00	Sales	184.00
<i>Newsletters</i>			Advertisements	20.00
Envelopes) 3 issues	76.60		<i>Indexer</i> subscriptions	910.00
Printing) 1,099.00			Overpaid subscription	10.00
Postage) 322.20		1,497.80	Seminar	750.00
Leaflet		45.00	Bank interest	31.24
Hon. Secretary expenses		173.06	RESI interest	
Hon. Treasurer expenses		50.06	Fixed term deposit	63.10
Printing - address labels		13.90	At call account June	7.46
Seminar		713.10	December	7.84
G.P.O. Box rental		57.00		
Bank charges		7.22		
Board of Assessors		30.00		
Meeting expenses		391.37		
Overpaid subscription refunded		<u>10.00</u>		
		3,826.09		
Operating surplus		<u>302.55</u>		
		\$4,128.64		
				<u>\$4,128.64</u>

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

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Cash in Bank on 1 January 1984
 On Call with RESI
 Fixed term deposit RESI

\$
 407.70
 187.76
 500.00

 1,095.46
 4,128.64

 5,224.10
 3,826.09

 \$1,398.01

Plus Income

Less Expenditure

Assets as at 31 December 1984

ASSETS
 Cash in bank 31 December 1984
 On call with RESI
 Fixed term deposit with RESI

\$
 631.85
 203.06
 563.10

 \$1,398.01

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BOOK REVIEWS - INDEXES MENTIONED

AUSTIN, Derek, *PRECIS: a manual of concept analysis and subject indexing*. 2nd edition. British Library. Reviewed by Michael J. Ramsden, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'The work has an excellent index, with entries generated (as is only appropriate) by the use of PRECIS.'

BRITISH *literary magazines : the Augustan age and the age of Johnson*. Edited by Alvin Sullivan. Greenwood Press. Reviewed by David Woodworth, United Kingdom Serials Group. *Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 2, December 1984.

'A full index completes a useful research tool.'

CHRISTOPHER Brennan. Edited by Terry Sturm. University of Queensland Press. Reviewed by Terry Sturm, *Australian book review*, no. 77, December 1984/January 1985.

'Like others in the series, it is marred by lack of an index.'

CLAGHORN, Gene. *Women composers and hymnists: a concise biographical dictionary*. Scarecrow. Reviewed by J. Hagger, *Australian and Academic research libraries*, vol. 15, no. 4, December, 1984.

'The arrangement of the material alphabetically by the women's names will not produce answers to the questions most likely to be asked, for example a request for information about the author of "Nearer my God to Thee"... The easiest way to find the answer to this question is to identify the author by consulting the "Index of first lines" in *Hymns ancient and modern*, then using this information to locate the biography in the work under review, a rather inefficient procedure.

It is to be hoped that there will be sufficient interest in this work to warrant undertaking a revised and expanded edition ...may it be complete with its own "Index to first lines".'

COLLEGE *librarianship*. Edited by A. Rennie McElroy. Library Association. Reviewed by Alan Bundy, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'The index, from an examination of the Australian chapter, cannot be faulted.'

DEAUMONT, Joanna. *How to do your own publishing : a complete guide to self-publishing in Australia*. Orlando Press, Reviewed by Wendy Lowenstein, *The Age*, 29 December 1984.

'She also provides an impeccable index and a most informative list of contents.'

THE *DICTIONARY of Australian quotations*. Edited by Stephen Murray-Smith. Heinemann. Reviewed by Evan Jones, *Australian book review*, no. 77, December 1984/January 1985.

'...dictionaries of quotations are useful primarily for identifying the half-remembered snatches of verse and prose that lie in everybody's mind.

It is hard to devise a fair test for this, but with the help of bibulous friends I prepared a short list of verse items to check. Using the "Key Word Index", there was no problem with "'We'll all be rooned", said Hanrahan", "the cicada's torture-point of song", "Grass is across the

wheel-tracks now". M'Dougal topped the score alright when I found that the eponymous hero was listed alphabetically under MD, and "the colt from Old Regret" was lassoed with regret, though there was no reference under colt...

There was no trouble with the "second-hand Europeans" who "pullulate/Timidly on the edge of alien shores", except that I looked first for "Europeans" under "Ideas and References" rather than "Key Words": this was simply a mistake, but it leaves me unclear about the virtues of having the two references separate. Looking at the excerpts from *The sentimental bloke* I find the wanted line, "'Put in the boot!' I sez. 'Put in the boot!'", but this is not to be found under "boot" in the "Key Words Index".

It adds up, perhaps, to a spotty performance - but one, I think, as good as could reasonably be hoped for; and better, in fact, than I expected.'

DIRECTORY of special libraries in Australia. 6th edn. Compiled and edited by Jan Cree. Library Association of Australia, Special Libraries Section. Reviewed by Jean Dartnall, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'Some improvement in the subject indexing might have been achieved by the use of "see" references or by indexing libraries under more terms. For example, searching "physics" in the subject index does not lead the user to the library of the Department of Science and Technology Antarctic Division which is indexed under "cosmic ray physics" and "upper atmosphere physics" and nor does searching under "atmospheric research". The library name index should prove useful.'

FIND that tune. Edited by William Gargan and Sue Sharma. Neal Schumann. Reviewed by David J. Jones, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'There are composer, lyricist and performer indexes, and a revealing first line index. Who would know for example that a song beginning "A bop bop a loom op a lop bop boom" would be entitled *Tutti Frutti*? And are there really so many songs which begin "Doo doo"?'

FJALLBRANT, Nancy. *The future of serials: publication, automation and management*. Chalmers University of Technology. Reviewed by David Woodworth, United Kingdom Serials Group. *Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 2, December 1984.

'There is a vast amount of information encompassed in this work, and it is a pity that an index was not provided, despite the further time delay and extra cost that would have been involved. Its provision would most certainly have enhanced the value of these collected papers.'

HOLUIGUE, Diane. *The French Kitchen*. Methuen. Reviewed by Vida Horn, *Australian book review*, no. 77, December 1984/January 1985.

'The index brings together listings of recipes by principal ingredient and by name.'

HORNADGE, Bill. *How to publish your own book: a complete guide to self-publishing in Australia*. Review Publications. Reviewed by Wendy Lowenstein, *The Age*, 29 December 1984.

'There is also a glossary of trade terms but (and this is a considerable disadvantage) no index.'

JONES, Gregory P. *The Federal government 1983: a chronology of events and decisions with references*. Canberra CAE. Reviewed by David J. Jones, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'There is a very full subject and author index, although some variation in the depth of its coverage can be detected - names in parentheses, for example, seem to have been excluded from the index. A note to that effect ought to appear somewhere.'

OFFICIAL publications of Western Europe. Edited by Eve Johansson. Mansell. Reviewed by D.H. Borchardt, *Australian academic and research libraries*, vol. 15, no. 4, December 1984.

'There are two indexes, an organisation and titles index and a subject index. Both appear to be reasonably reliable.'

WATSON, Don. *Caledonia Australis : Scottish highlanders on the frontier of Australia*. William Collins. Reviewed by Beverley Kingston, *Australian book review*, no. 77, December 1984/January 1985.

'The index is perfunctory, Karl Marx is quoted several times on the aboriginal inhabitants of Scotland (not the Aborigines of Australia as it may seem from the back cover) and discussed among the references, but his name is not indexed. Nor are many other individuals who appear briefly and who are bound to be of more interest in their local history context than has been assumed by the index. Most reprehensibly, there is a collective entry for the Kurnai tribes, but none of any of the five different groups who make up the Kurnai and who are discussed separately and at length at various places in the text.'

YEARBOOK of international organizations 1984/85. Saur. Reviewed by David J. Jones, *Incite*, 30 November 1984.

'Users would be well advised to pay particular attention to the introduction to this work, especially if they have not had a good look at its indexing for an edition or two. A KWIC approach has been used, with one general index, rather than a multiplicity of specific indexes. This works satisfactorily and efficiently if you become familiar with how it works, and does not seem too high a price to pay for rapid production.'

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS MEDAL

In 1985 the Australian Society of Indexers will offer, for the first time, an award for an outstanding index to a book or periodical compiled and first published in Australia. The award will be called the Australian Society of Indexers Medal.

To be eligible for the award, the index must be in print and must have been first published in Australia between 1 January 1983 and 31 December 1984. It must have been compiled in Australia even though the text to which it refers may have originated outside Australia.

Indexers, librarians, authors, publishers, indeed all who are concerned with indexed publications are invited to recommend indexes as contenders for the 1985 award. Recommendations with essential bibliographical details should be sent to the Secretary, Australian Society of Indexers, G.P.O. Box 1251L Melbourne, Victoria 3001, by 30 April 1985.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Society of Indexers' 1985 Weekend Conference, 'Indexing now', will be held at Hatfield College, Durham, from 5 to 7 July 1985. Speakers will include George Ottley (railway bibliography) Peter Mann (people's reading habits) and Diana Dunn (Victorian children's literature).

Peter Grieg has revised his paper 'So you want to index?'. The new version appears in the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada's *Bulletin*, vol. 7, no. 2, December 1984. It covers learning to index, opportunities for employment, professional ethics, charging for indexing and includes a bibliography. Also in this issue is 'International miscellany on indexing' which includes details of the periodicals issued by the Society of Indexers, the Australian Society of Indexers and the American Society of Indexers.

This extract from an item in *Australian bookseller and publisher*, vol. 64, no. 944, November 1984, should be of interest to indexers, in the light of the comment made by one of our members in the last issue of the *Newsletter*:

The Society of Editors has received advice from Parkhill, Lithgow and Gibson, chartered accountants, on the matter of withheld tax from payments to freelance editors. The Society sought the advice following a Taxation Office instruction to publishers to withhold tax from freelancers. According to the advice, freelance editors are 'Professional persons' under terms of the Act and as such are exempt from PAYE provisions (p. 20)

CORRECTION

Details of the book reviewed by S. Harvey in this *Newsletter*, vol. 8, no. 4, November 1984, p.51, are as follows:

Who is who in classification and indexing. Edited by I. Dahlberg. Frankfurt/Main, Indeks Verlag, 1983.

Part of the description was inadvertently omitted from the review.

BOOK FOR SALE

Indexers on indexing. Edited by Leonard Montagne Harrod for The Society of Indexers. R.R. Bowker, 1978. New and unused. \$20 or nearest offer. Apply to -

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Telephone : (07) 262 1676

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* * * * *

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Closing date for next issue

22 April 1985