AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

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NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 16 September 1986 : 5.30 for 6 p.m.

at CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne

Committee Room, Third Floor

Topic: Fingerprint indexing

Speaker: A Fingerprint-Expert from Fingerprint-Bureau, Victorian Police Force

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INDEXING THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The raw material of Australian history, like that of many countries, is notoriously difficult to locate, lacking in any appreciable measure of bibliographical control. I still remember, as a prime example of this situation, the excitement with which one of my students in the subject Australian Studies located a veritable mine of information about the activities of the Kanakas in Queensland, in a cupboard in an office of a church missionary society.

A system designed to be used with local history collections, such as are widely held by local libraries and historical societies, has been designed by the Gympie-based firm Australian Information Retrieval Services and is being demonstrated in a number of places in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia during July and August. The Melbourne demonstration, held on 24 July, was attended by about 30 people, mostly from historical societies and with some librarians and indexers. The system consists of a kit of documents, an option of computer software, and a number of services provided by the firm. The demonstration began with an account of the origins of the project, followed by a videotape showing the system in use, a detailed explanation of the contents of the kit, then time for questions from the audience.

The system is 'designed to be used by unskilled volunteers or professionals in the field'. It is similar in this respect to the current project to index the *Argus*, as described in the *Newsletter* vol. 9 no. 4, November 1985. The kit contains instructions concerning description, arrangement, storage and subject analysis of the material and forms on which the data is to be recorded and sent to the central processing point. It was claimed that these instructions, having been thoroughly tested with the help of both professional advisers and unskilled operators, present no problems to the users of the kit. I did not make a thorough examination of the material but, from what I did see, I see no reason to doubt the claim.

The present output from the system consists of printed copies, computer-produced, of the material submitted, the record consisting of 'an alphabetical index, including cross-references, with reference to document/item identifier (and page number if applicable)'. There is provision for updating the data, for the listing of the material by date and for the provision of entries on a floppy disc which can be used in the recipient's own computer system. The firm hopes that 'the Kit should form the basis of a standardised nationwide index to collections'.

This very brief statement gives little idea of the quality of the thinking that has gone into the preparation of this venture. Admittedly, my exposure to it was cursory but I was impressed, both by the concept and by the provisions for its execution. I have two main reservations; the videotape, especially, makes it seem all too easy to accomplish the enormous task. The printed material distributed at the session makes no bones about this. The details provided about the operation at Gympie, the 'guinea pig' for the scheme, give a better idea of the time and effort needed for the work to be done by both inexperienced volunteers and professionals.

The other reservation relates to the 'quality control' of the subject input. The system uses, as a thesaurus, the very useful publication *Local studies collections* by John Flint and Anne Berry, a publication of the Library Association of Australia. There is provision in the system for adding new terms and the control for this is at the point of data collection. It was not made clear what professional expertise is available to do this important task, although there was mention of an archivist and a librarian on the staff.

This brief statement is not meant in any way to be an endorsement of the system but it is to be hoped that it will encourage those involved in the indexing of material so important to historians, both professional and amateur, to investigate carefully its potential and, if found to be of value, to pursue with vigour efforts to get the necessary funding.

Full information about the system is available from: Australian Information Retrieval Services, P.O. Box 567, Gympie, Queensland 4570.

Jean Hagger

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AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER INDEXES *

One of the most noticeable things about indexes for Australian newspapers is the lack of a consistent index over a long period of time. This is in contrast to both England, which has the *Times* index from 1790, and the U.S.A., which has the *New York Times* index since 1851. I'm sure the fact that Australia is so Stateist and lacks a good quality, long-running national newspaper contributes to this.

The AACOBS Working Party on Bibliography did a study of the feasibility of establishing a national newspaper index in 1979. It was outlined in *Australian Newspaper Index Feasibility Study*. Unfortunately, the National Library apparently delayed the project indefinitely in 1982.

In *Argap 2: a Second Research Guide to Australian Politics and Cognate Subjects* there is a good chart which arranged indexes chronologically - a useful approach as it means that anyone wanting to find newspaper information for a particular time period can simply look at this chart and see if there is an index for that period.

I am going to concentrate on the first two sections of the list of indexes which follows this article - indexes to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and databases on AUSINET which index newspapers.

(1) Sydney Morning Herald Indexes

These are important because the *Herald* is a major source of newspaper information for people living in N.S.W.; also, the indexes are in so many bits and pieces that I thought it would be useful to bring them together and discuss some of them more fully.

The index, as can be seen from the published list, has had a chequered history.

From 1842 to January 1945 there is an index available on microfiche from the Mitchell Library. Prior to 1842 there is the index to the *Sydney Gazette*, which was a forerunner of the *Herald*.

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* Reprinted, with permission, from *State Library of N.S.W. - PLD Newsletter* no. 46, March 1986.

From 1900-1904 there is an index available on microfiche from Pascoe's. This was compiled by Esther Corsellis, who worked as an indexer for the *Herald* Library for twenty years. She is now working part-time for Fairfax and will eventually index the *Herald* up to 1919. As she herself said, it is a fairly subjective exercise. She is concentrating on indexing material which she doesn't think is well covered elsewhere, e.g. she doesn't index much Melbourne news because that is covered in the *Argus* index. She is including leaders and letters to the editor, and is covering in detail subjects such as industrial relations and strikes, which she feels are badly covered elsewhere.

There is a 1904-1918 index which is also available from the Mitchell Library, and then there is another gap till 1927, when Fairfax first started publishing the quarterly *Sydney Morning Herald* index. This index goes through till 1961. The subject headings used are fairly general. The Bondi Icebergs, for example, would be indexed under 'Swimming' rather than 'Bondi Icebergs', and there are some particularly general headings, such as 'Leaders' and 'Special articles.'

In 1961 the Mitchell Library began an in-house card index, and 1961-1978 of this index is available on microfiche from Pascoe's for approximately $170.00. The following points from the introduction to the microfiche index give some idea of its quality: 'This index has been compiled as an in-house reference aid, and is highly selective. In addition, the policy governing the selection of items for inclusion has varied from time to time, as has the availability of trained staff. In no sense is this index a complete or even consistent reference tool; it is, rather, a partial index to certain sections of the *Sydney Morning Herald.*' Which all sounds rather damning, but given that there is nothing else it's not too bad. I have used it on a number of occasions with reasonable success. For example, I once had to try to find figures for the occurrence of arson in N.S.W. schools. As the Department of Education doesn't release these figures, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was one of my few sources, and I found a reasonable amount of information under 'Fires and fire prevention.'

The Mitchell Library card index is still being maintained, and is available for use in the Library. Subject headings and coverage guidelines have been tightened up quite a lot in the last few years. Material which isn't indexed includes overseas items which don't have direct relevance to Australia; crimes, unless they become causes celebres; sports news, apart from major events; and most business items.

The index thesaurus was originally based on headings used by the Mitchell Library. The Mitchell now uses Library of Congress subject headings, so the indexers use a combination of LC, *New York Times* index headings, the APAIS thesaurus, and their own heads! The Mitchell is hoping to automate its *Herald* index eventually, and when it does the rest of the card index will be microfilmed.

Apparently the *Herald* is also considering putting up a full text database, but I think that this is still very much in the planning stages.

Both the State Library's General Reference Library and the Mitchell scan the *Herald* daily for their 'finding lists.' GRL, for example, would index changes in government, deaths of important people, and more obscure items such as the origin and spelling of the word 'barbecue' or the location of

nude beaches in Sydney. Basically, it's a matter of trying to anticipate anything which might come up as a query. Both these finding lists are available indirectly through the telephone inquiry services.

The Mitchell holds a card index to book reviews in the *Herald* from 1945. At one time they indexed other newspapers as well.

Both APAIS and ABIX selectively index the *Herald*. More information about this is given in the section on databases.

I contacted the *Sydney Morning Herald* library to find out the policy on access to their indexes and got the answer I expected, which is basically that they refer queries on to the State Library. They are worth keeping in mind if you are desperate, though. Once I had to find out the number of people who died in the Australian desert in the last twenty years, and after having very little success I eventually rang the *Herald* library, which had a heading 'Thirst, died of', which I was very impressed with, and they gave me a list of references to newspaper articles.

(2) Databases

This seems to be the direction that newspaper indexing is heading in and I shall go into some detail in this area. Because I have worked in the State Library's Research Service it is one of the areas I know best.

Online indexes have some major advantages when it comes to finding current newspaper information. Firstly, they can be very up to date - the full text of the *Financial Review* is available at the same time as the hard copy - and secondly, because you can search on areas other than descriptors, e.g. titles or abstracts; you can pick up on jargon words and catch-phrases and new concepts (e.g. 'computer crime') which may not have reached the stage of being index terms but which are the sort of terms journalists are very fond of.

(a) ABIX

As an example of ABIX - the Australian Business Index - I did a fairly rough search on the ownership of VCRs in Australia. I searched under 'Videos' or 'VCRs', combined with 'Ownership' or 'Penetration' (which is the industry term). A major problem when using ABIX is that there are no specific subject headings, only general ones, and the two items I found came up under 'Advertising' and 'Electronics-Videos.' If you are using this index manually this lack of subject headings makes it difficult to use. Another problem is that the titles contain a lot of abbreviations and are fairly cryptic, which doesn't make them good for searching.

What ABIX does do is index companies by name, so this makes it a good source of company information.

Despite the problems, if you want anything on Australian business information in newspapers you are forced to use ABIX - and it's worth remembering that in our society business touches on a lot of areas.

(b) AFRTEXT

This comprehensiveness is also worth remembering with regard to the *Australian Financial Review* full text database, AFRTEXT. The AFR has a very broad view of what business is and, for example, will cover something like RSI because it affects productivity.

The AFR has become a full text database since September 1984. This means that the whole newspaper is online. Because of this they have stopped indexing it, although they still provide abstracts. Descriptors are represented in the text paragraph.

I did the same search on AFRTEXT as on ABIX, but whereas on ABIX I found 19 references, on AFRTEXT I found 176! I did a quick panic and then made the search as narrow as I could by specifying that the words 'video' or 'VCR' must be directly before the words 'ownership' or 'penetration' and cut down the number of references to 10. I think that this will be a problem with full text databases, especially if they don't include indexing. You will certainly find more relevant material at the same time, and at $90.00 an hour this could become very expensive.

(c) WEST

This is an index to the *National Times* produced by the Western Australian Institute of Technology. It's a fairly standard index. The *National Times* is a good source of current social issues and analysis of political events.

(d) APAIS

Last but not least is the trusty APAIS (Australian Public Affairs Information Services), which is available in hard copy and online (APAI). Both APAIS and WEST use the APAIS thesaurus for their descriptors, which I find a bit too general, but because APAIS isn't too large it doesn't become a problem.

Conclusion

To sum up: because of the lack of a major Australian newspaper index, and the proliferation of bits and pieces, the whole area is very confusing, and matters don't seem to be improving. What seems to be happening now is that there is a lot of overlap, e.g. the *Australian Financial Review* is indexed by ABIX, AFRTEXT, and APAIS, and the *National Times* by ABIX, APAIS, and WEST. Especially with online searching, this becomes very expensive, as you keep picking up the same references.

Sue Scott

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TWO MEMBERS HONOURED AT RMIT

Dietrich Borchardt was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *Honoris Causa* at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology conferring of Diplomas and Degrees on Thursday, 29 May 1986. The citation read at the ceremony referred to Dr Borchardt's distinguished career as a librarian and bibliographer.

Michael Ramsden has been appointed Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Mr. Ramsden was formerly Head of the Department of Librarianship at the Institute.

* * * * * *

RECOMMENDED RATE FOR FREELANCE INDEXERS

The attention of members is drawn, once again, to the Society's recommended rate for freelance indexers. This was last issued in the *Newsletter* vol. 8, no. 4, November 1984, and there has not been any change in the recommendation since that date.

The recommended freelance hourly rate for 1986 was $16.75, with provision for the addition of CPI increases from 1 January, 1985. Taking these increases into account, the present rate should be $18.00 per hour. In 1987, the rate should be $18.50 plus the CPI increases and in 1988, $20.00 plus the increases.

It is emphasised that the above are the minimum rates which indexers should charge. It is known that some members quote substantially below these rates, whilst others are known to quote at the rate of $25.00 per hour and have found publishers willing to pay at this rate. May they continue to prosper!

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Miss B. Bank	28 Ledger Avenue, Fawkner, Vic. 3060
Mrs E. Dawson	33 Stubbs Avenue, North Geelong, Vic. 3215
Mrs K. Husband	156 Springfield Road, North Blackburn, Vic. 3130
Mrs C. Jones	6 Battery Square, Battery Point, Tas. 7000
Mrs M. Jones	1 Beatrice Street, Burwood, Vic. 3125
Mr C. Lannan	50 David Street, Hampton, Vic. 3188
Mrs G.K. Moss	6 Brimar Court, Mt Waverley, Vic. 3149
Ms K. Wood	Brooks Waterloo Publishers, 36 Albert Road, South Melbourne, Vic. 3205

BOOK REVIEWS - INDEXES MENTIONED

ARCHER, Michael and others. *The kangaroo*. Weldon. Reviewed by W. E. Poole, *Australian natural history* vol. 22, no. 1, 1986.
'...a table listing the species, their current status, and changes since European settlement, plus an adequate index.'

BURNES, Don & PAGE, Glenda. *Insights and strategies for teaching reading*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Reviewed by Jonathan Anderson, *Australian journal of reading* vol. 9, no. 2, 1986.
'A weakness is the Index. Here the failure to tie together the different sections becomes more apparent. The reference to readability, for instance, is confined to one chapter though the topic merits a sub-heading in a prior chapter; *register* does not rate a mention although it was good to see this concept dealt with in some detail in the first chapter; a surprising omission is any reference to cohesion. The examples could be multiplied, but at least there is an Index.'

CASHMAN, Norine D. & BRAUNSTEIN, Mark M. (eds). *Slide buyer's guide*. Libraries Unlimited. Reviewed by Frances O'Neil, *Australasian college libraries* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'Another improvement on the 4th edition is the 5th edition's index. The index to the previous edition of the guide was arranged by chronological period and then by medium. There are two sections to the 5th edition's index: the subject index (an alphabetical list of subject headings prepared by a former assistant editor to the *Art Index*), and the name index (an alphabetical list of suppliers). Index references are to the entry (running) numbers.

The indexes are good in acting as a guide to the general subject areas offered by suppliers. One thing missing is an index to suppliers who specialise in photographing current exhibitions (e.g. Courtauld Institute of Art) or suppliers who have slides from major exhibitions.'

GILANDAS, Alex and others. *Handbook of neuropsychological assessment*. Grune & Stratton. Reviewed by R. Kaplan, *Canadian journal of psychiatry* vol. 31, no. 1, 1986.
'References and indices are quite adequate.'

Historical records of Victoria - foundation series, vol.4: Communications, trade and transport 1836-1839. Public Record Office of Victoria. Reviewed in *The genealogist* vol. 5, no. 2, June 1986.
'Jean Hagger's excellent index makes the task of finding an ancestor in the period very easy!'

MC MAUCH, Judy. *What garden pest or disease is that?* Lansdowne. Reviewed by Arthur Woods, *Australian natural history* vol. 22, no. 1, 1986.
'I am extremely thankful that the author thoughtfully provides scientific names as well as common names, but I must be allowed one little grumble. The organisms are set out in alphabetical order - "painted vine moth, paper bark sawfly, passion-vine hopper". That's fine if you already know the name of the beast, but grouping by main host plant, or by the organisms place in the animal or vegetable kingdoms, would seem better even though the cross-referencing works.'

MIDDLETON, Michael. *Analysis of inquiry functions in online systems*. School of Librarianship, University of N.S.W. Reviewed by Glenn Sanders, *Australasian college libraries* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'This has also led to a lack of depth in the index, which inhibits the book's usefulness. For example, the feature which I know as a "wild card character" is not listed, and I eventually found it, by browsing, under "single character substitution".'

MITEV, Nathalie and others. *Designing an online public access catalogue: Okapi, a catalogue on a local area network.* British Library. Reviewed by Dennis Walter, *Australasian college libraries*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'The book is generously indexed.'

MORRIS, Jill & LANCASTER, Mary. *Writing and selling freelance articles to newspapers and magazines.* Interface. Reviewed by A. W. Sheppard, *Australian book review* no. 79, April 1986.
'Perhaps the second edition will also have an index.'

OLEY, Elizabeth & MARTIN, Penny (eds). *Bibliography of education theses in Australia.* Australian Council for Educational Research. Reviewed by Kay Schaffer, *Australasian college libraries* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'The *subject index* contains descriptors and identifiers selected from the *Australian thesaurus of education descriptors* which is itself derived from the Eric descriptors.'

ROBERTSON, John & MC CARTHY, John. *Australian war strategy 1939-1945.* Reviewed by Ashton Robinson, *Australian book review* no. 81, June 1986.
'The book is clearly laid out and very well indexed, and includes a set of biographical notes.'

SLAVENS, Thomas P. *Reference interviews, questions and materials.* Scarecrow. Reviewed by Paul Orsman, *Australasian college libraries* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'Because of the book's arrangement, it does not have a general index and functions quite adequately without one. The lists of reference materials at the end of each chapter basically cover the types of material found in that chapter.'

WALFORD, A. (ed.). *Walford's guide to current British periodicals in the humanities and social sciences.* Library Association. Reviewed by Helen Goring, *Australasian college libraries* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'...the combined title and subject index (compiled by Kenneth Bakewell) amply compensates for any limitations in accessibility which could occur.'

WOODBURY, Marda. *Childhood information sources.* Information Resources. Reviewed by Chris Johnson, *Australasian college libraries*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1986.
'In the absence of a comprehensive subject approach the only way the user will be led to explore new fields or view the child from new perspectives (which the author states is a major objective of this volume) is through a first class index. Unfortunately the index is the book's greatest weakness. The only way a user can be sure of finding every entry on a specific topic is to read the whole book.

There are insufficient subject entries, e.g. E18 Bibliography of infant foods and nutrition rates an entry under Infants but not under Food or Nutrition while E73 Failure to thrive is entered under Growth but not under the equally pertinent headings Infants and Health.

There are also some glaring omissions, e.g. L52 and Q6 both deal with advocacy and do not rate an entry under that heading in the index while Family education does not appear in the index at all even though it is a major area of early childhood education and the subject matter of several of the citations.

The index could also be improved by more *see* and *see also* references.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Society will be conducting a one-day seminar on a range of topics related to indexing on Saturday 15 November 1986. Details will be forwarded to all members at a later date.

The new edition of *Indexers available* should be available in late September this year.

The Society of Indexers will be holding a conference in Chester on 10-12 July 1987, and is offering each affiliated Society a free place (board and lodging). Full details of the Conference will be sent out with the October *Indexer*. AusSI members interested in attending the conference should contact the Secretary, Australian Society of Indexers, P.O. Box 1251L, G.P.O., Melbourne Vic. 3001. The closing datefor expressions of interest is 28 November 1986.

The *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration* vol. 12, no. 3, 1985, includes the report of the panel of judges for the 1985 Annual Reports Award. The panel urges departments 'to provide an extensive index to reports. Contents pages, no matter how detailed, as in the case of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, are no substitute for a comprehensive index located at the back of the book!.

Thanks to those who responded to our request for contributions to the 'Book reviews - indexes mentioned' section of the *Newsletter*. If you come across any items which would be suitable, please send them to the Editor, Australian Society of Indexers, G.P.O. Box 1251L, Melbourne Vic. 3001.

The Society has joined the Forum of Information Associations (FIA). Jennifer Challis will be representing the Society at future meetings.

The international standard ISO5963-1985 *Methods for examining documents, determining their subjects, and selecting indexing terms* has been published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The standard provides techniques for document analysis; it is intended to apply to the preliminary stages of indexing and does not deal with the practices of any particular indexing system.

We welcome contributions to the *Newsletter*. If you have any material you feel would be suitable for inclusion, please send it to the Editor, Australian Society of Indexers, G.P.O. Box 1251L, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, by Monday 27th October 1986.

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SMALL SCALE BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES

Edited by
PETER JUDGE and BRENDA GERRIE

Presents an introductory text on the principles and practice of database creation and management. Small scale databases or information packages for research purposes are emphasized.

Information is presented as a series of contributed chapters covering all the aspects of building and managing databases. Topics range from why build a database, and how to index a database to what factors are important when selecting a suitable computer system on which to process the database as well as the management, control and cost benefit aspects of operating in a database environment.

Little prior knowledge of databases and computing is needed, but a knowledge of cataloguing, indexing and classification procedures in a manual system is assumed.

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