Australian Society of Indexers
NEWSLETTER

Editorial

In this month's Newsletter we have contributions from John Scarce, who introduces us to the Indexes available at the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and from Kingsley Siebel, who writes about ways to increase Society membership numbers. There is also a list of indexing and thesaurus software taken from Index-L on the Internet, which may be of use to readers.

ACT Events

Come to dinner with Pat Woolley of Wild & Woolley, publishers, Sydney. She will talk about indexing and editing from the publisher's perspective.

Date: 15 November 1994
Time: 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm
Venue: Canberra Institute of Technology, School of Tourism & Hospitality, Constitution Avenue, Reid
Dinner: three-course meal plus coffee (drinks extra)
Cost: members of the Society of Indexers or the Society of Editors, $22. Non-members, $25
Bookings for both: Geraldine Triffitt, tel (06) 246 1177

NSW Branch Meeting

'Actual Indexing' — come and find out what indexers and indexing services actually do (rather than what they say they do). Ross Todd, from the University of Technology, Sydney, and Connie Wilson, from the University of New South Wales, will present their views. Garry Cousins

will also describe the features of the latest version of Cindex indexing software.

Date: 11 October 1994
Meeting venue: Jean Garling Room, 1st Floor, Mitchell Wing, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney
Time: refreshments from 6.00 pm, meeting starts at 6.30 pm
Donation to cover costs: $5.00
Inquiries: Alan Walker, tel (02) 380 5875

Victorian Branch Indexing Course

Last call for anyone interested in attending the Victorian Branch "Introduction to Book Indexing" course, to be held at RMIT on 26, 27 and 28 September.
Bookings are now almost filled, but there are currently three places still available - you will need to be quick!
For more information, please contact Max Mc Master on (03) 571 6341.

Acres of Australia

And now, a word on Queensland from the USA. The following excerpt has been reproduced from Key Words: The Newsletter of the American Society of Indexers vol. 2(3) (May/Jun 1994), p. 4.

Well, you know me: I never just index anything – I have to analyze its every detail. And I get particularly turned on by really large numbers. Predictably, when my Mar/Apr '94 _Key Words_ arrived, my glance quickly came to rest on the 25 fascinating facts about Australia—and then zeroed in on Fact #6 about "1 690 500 acre Woologorang Station in Queensland, which is bigger than Texas!"

This revelation admits of three interpretations. First, Queensland is bigger than the state of Texas. Well, yes. It's also bigger than Alaska. Not exactly your basic gee-whiz statistic. Second—and presumably the intended meaning— Woologorang Station is bigger than the state of Texas. If we take the figure of 266 807 square miles given for the area of Texas in my National Geographic Society atlas and my World Almanac (Britannica comes up with 276 338), then multiply by the 640 acres in either American or British square miles, we find that Woologorang

Station would fit into Texas 101 times with room to spare. A third possibility would be that Woologorang Station is bigger than the place named Texas in southeastern Queensland. In that case, a footnote would seem in order so that the joke could be appreciated by readers who don't own a National Geographic atlas.

Clarification anyone?

Babs Klein
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Indexes for Genealogists
by
John Scarce

John Scarce, Genealogical Research Officer at the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, presented an informative talk at the Melbourne General Meeting on 10 August 1994 about the Indexes available at the Registry. The following is the first instalment of an edited version of John's talk, in which he discusses the history of the Indexes up until the compilation of the Victorian Pioneers Index.

The second instalment of John's talk , which will be published in next month's Newsletter, will provide details of the Victorian Pioneers Index and its strengths and weaknesses for users. The third and final instalment will summarise how best to use the Indexes of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the best approach for making requests for information to the Registry.

The records for the Colony of Victoria commence in 1837 with the Registry's holdings of the Early Church Records of Baptism, Burial and Marriage. The Civil Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages began in the Colony of Victoria on 1 July 1853. Today, a combined total of some 130 000 births, deaths and marriages are registered annually.

In many cases, the Early Church Records comprise the original parish registers while other records are certified copies and/or summaries of the originals. This accounts for there often being more than one reference to an Early Church Record event

in the Victorian Pioneers Index as there may be two or three documents relating to, for example, a particular marriage. However, the Church Records often do not contain the same amount of secondary detail as is contained in the later civil registrations. For example, baptisms give no details regarding parents' ages, parents' places of birth or marriage, or details of previous children. An Early Church Record of Marriage does not list the names of the parents of the parties involved, nor the parties' ages and places of birth.

For the wealth of information contained in the later Civil Registration entries of Births, Deaths and Marriages, we have to thank William Henry Archer, who arrived in Melbourne in November 1852. He devised a detailed plan for the registration of these events which led to the appointment in July 1853 of 76 Deputy Registrars to record details of births and deaths throughout Victoria. Civil Registrars of Marriage were appointed in 1859.

Householders were given 60 days to notify a birth or death. Such notification had to be made in person to the District Registrar. This accounts for the words 'present' or 'not present' appearing on Birth Certificates, indicating whether or not the child had been taken along to the local Registry.

The Deputy Registrars made two copies of each entry of birth or death. One copy was

entered into their Register Book while the second copy was made on a loose schedule which formed part of their quarterly returns to the Registry in Melbourne. The Deputy Registrars were also required to maintain their own indexes to the events that they recorded.

Once all of the returns for a particular quarter had been received at the Registry they were given a registration number and eventually bound into large volumes. The certificates for each quarter were arranged in alphabetical order of Registration District.

As a general rule, registration numbers allocated by the Registry are to be found in the middle of birth, death or marriage entries. The numbers appearing in the left-hand column of an entry are the registration numbers used by the Deputy or District Registrar. These numbers are meant to be consecutive throughout the existence of a particular registration district, however, District Registrars sometimes began their quarterly returns at number one each year. This often makes it difficult to ascertain the total number of registrations in a given district.

With the exception of the first few years of registration, each year has at least four volumes of birth, death or marriage records. As the nineteenth century progressed and the population increased, one volume per quarter was often required, especially in the birth records. For example, 1888 has seven volumes of birth entries per quarter.

The volumes vary in size. They are stored on steel shelving in what is termed the Registry Strongroom. Naturally, some of the registers are heavy and over the years the binding and pages of many volumes have deteriorated badly.

The *Births, Deaths and Marriages* Act of 1959 brought about the first fundamental change in registration procedures since 1853. From 1960, local registration districts were abolished and all registrations were centralised in Melbourne. Commencing in 1982, certificates were issued directly from microfilm copies of the original registers in order to preserve the original records and to speed up the application process. Microfilm copies of an

entire page of a register can have the advantage of sometimes showing records relating to other family members that the applicant was unaware of.

On 1 July 1989, the Registry implemented the LIFEDATA system whereby all current birth and death registrations have since been recorded in a computerised format. All births in metropolitan Melbourne sine 1929 have also been entered onto the system. In 1985, microfiche copies of portions of the various indexes to births, deaths and marriages were released for sale to the public.

The indexes are, of course, the key to unlocking the vast amount of detail contained in the birth, marriage and death certificates held by the Registry. Such records are of interest not only to genealogists, but are also relevant to the study of demography and to the wider field of historical research. They are also of increasing importance in the tracing of hereditary diseases.

The microfiche indexes, along with the Victorian Pioneers Index, have proved to be very popular. The Births Index is available up to 1913 and the Marriage Index is available up to 1930. September last year saw the release of an additional Death Index (Issue No. 7) which comprises deaths between 1961 and 1980. This new index also complements the recently released Probate Index.

There are a number of complexities within the original Birth, Death and Marriage indexes which may cause problems for inexperienced genealogists. The first thing to remember is that many of the early civil registrations were of births and deaths that had occurred prior to July 1853. These events are indexed under the year of registration and not the year the event occurred.

In the original indexes, during the period 1853–1872, there are separate indexes for marine births and deaths. In some years the Marine Index is found at the end of the yearly index. Where marine entries are interspersed with the ordinary index entries they are indicated by the suffix 'm' and the column headed 'place' states either 'at sea', 'sea' or the abbreviated name of the vessel upon which the event occurred.

To 1879, the original indexes are split half-yearly and marriages are complicated by a further splitting into separate indexes for males and females. The Marriage Index for a particular year can therefore be split into four separate indexes.

It should be noted that in the Death Indexes from 1853 to 1880, 'place' always refers to the place of birth of the deceased and not to the place of death. The exception to this is the listing of marine deaths which, in a sense, state the place of death, as the death occurred at sea. The place of death is shown in the Death Index from 1881 onwards.

For marriages, 'place' refers to the birthplace of the first mentioned spouse, not the place of marriage. The exceptions to this are the Early Church Records where 'place' usually refers to the parish where the marriage was recorded.

Unfortunately, the Marriage Indexes for the period 1853–1865 do not list the birthplaces of the parties even though the birthplaces are noted on the actual registration entries. The same occurs with the recently released Issue 5 Marriage Index 1914–1930, where the places of birth of the parties are not shown in the Index.

From 1896, entries in the Indexes were consolidated by surnames or by groups of alphabetically related surnames. This system continued in use until 1940 when yearly indexes were again introduced.

For the Consolidated Indexes after 1895, all index sets have Guidebooks which are vital in locating the correct microfiche to use when searching for a particular surname.

The legibility of the original indexes on microfiche varies enormously. The microfiche copies are taken directly from the pages of the Index volumes, many of which are handwritten. The ink, depending on its quality (or perhaps its degree of dilution) has in many cases faded, making it very difficult to read names and numbers. Other pages have been torn as a result of years of constant use. Repairs have been made using adhesive tape which, once again, obliterates names and registration numbers. Some pages have had new paper adhered to their torn sides and the registration numbers re-written. The clerks transcribing the numbers often wrote them down incorrectly, causing us problems today in locating the correct certificates.

There is a special problem associated with the recently release Deaths Index for 1961 to 1980. When the original index books were printed, many of the tops of names and registration numbers were not properly formed, making it sometimes difficult to read the data accurately.

Legibility is not a problem associated with the computer-generated Victorian Pioneers Index which was released in March 1992. It is a consolidated listing of the Early Church and Civil Records between 1837 and 1888.

This compilation was undertaken due to a desire by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to record all of the people who lived in Australia between 1788 and 1888 and was also a Bicentenary project. When complete, it will hopefully be a Australia-wide.

In November 1990, the Registry became involved in the project so as to enhance and improve the quality of the data before its release to the public. This involved removing the duplicate registration entries and the insertion of those entries which had been missed either in the original indexes or in the data entry process. Work continued at the Registry with several computer programs being used to tidy up misleading or incorrect punctuation within records and to re-enter places of births and deaths in the indexes which did not already contain such information or where it was ambiguous.

After all of the duplicate entries and all of the missing numbers were accounted for, out of a total of 1.74 million entries, there are only 57 entries in the Consolidated Index for which there are no corresponding certificates. These entries are identified by the suffix 'Y' following the number.

To be continued next month.
John Scarce

INDEX-L INFO

The following information about software, network connections and professional indexers' societies was taken from Index-L on the Internet.

INDEXING SOFTWARE
(All of these are for DOS machines...no Macs)

Cindex
Indexing Research
Box 18609
Rochester, New
Tel (716) 461-5530
Fax: (716) 442-3924

IN>SORT
Kensa Software
PO Box 4415
Northbrook, IL 60065
Tel (708) 559-0297

Macrex
Bayside Indexing Service
PO Box 3051
Daly City, CA 95015-0051
Tel (415) 756-0821
Fax: (415) 757-1567

THESAURUS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE
ARIS tel (718) 884-9538. Developed by Jim Anderson at Rutgers.

BEAT THESAURUS SOFTWARE. Developed by Joseph Sau for the Catalonian language. Distributed as shareware. Runs on DOS PC. Limited scope notes of 256 characters. Supports complex relationships. Allows output in a variety of fashions. For more information, contact Richard Pearce-Moses, Curator Photographs, Arizona State University Libraries, Tempe, AZ 85287-1006. IACRPM2ASUVM.INFRE.ASU.EDU (Internet). IACRPM@ASUACAD (Bitnet).

ENERGY TECHNOLOGY DATA EXCHANGE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY THESAURUS SYSTEM Created by the US Dept. of Energy's Office of Scientific and Technical Information. Automatic reciprocal generation (or deletion). Supports the following relationship types: broader term, narrower term, related term, used for, seen from, use, and see. Notifies the creator of possible logical errors. Maintains the date entered and date of last change. Allows for scope notes, definitions, and status codes. Software is written in FORTRAN for DEC VAX running the VMS operating system. Software is available from the Energy Science and Technology Software Center, US Dept. of Energy, Office of Scientific and Technical Information, PO Box 62, Oak Ridge, TN 37831. tel (615) 576-2606 or e-mail estsc@adonis.osti.gov. For info from a user's viewpoint, contact Catherine Grissom, tel (615) 576-1175, or e-mail grissom@a1.osti.gov.

ET! by CP Software tel (415) 391-5290.

LEXICO2 BY Diversified Data Technologies tel (301) 469-9001.

MULTITES. A multilingual thesaurus manager capable of handling up to nine languages. Developed by Hector Echevarria. Latest version 4.0 boasts of many powerful thesaurus construction and management features. Contact Mr. Echevarria for a demo disk. PO Box 12420, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. Tel (910) 275-8181.

STRIDE by Questans tel (301) 593-8901.

TCS (Thesaurus Construction System), professional edition, release 2.1, 1994. Allows up to 35 thesauri, 2 000 hierarchies, and an unlimited number of terms. Has hierarchical, alphabetical, and permuted displays. Automatically inserts new terms in order; creates reciprocal relationships (BT, NT, RT, UF/USE). Creates hierarchies and allows them to be moved. Includes scope notes and user-defined scope notes. Allows use of facet indicators and is menu or command driven. Descriptors can be up to 60 characters in length with scope notes of unlimited length. Available from Lui-Palmer, 11666 Gateway Blvd., Suite 195, Los Angeles, CA 90064. Tel (310) 390-4884. Fax (310) 390-9270. (As an aside: this package was used for Jessica Milstead's 1994 book, *ASIS Thesaurus of Information Science*

and Librarianship, published for ASIS by Learned Information, Inc., Medford, NJ).

TERM MANAGER by Caxton Software tel (416) 366-2574.

Some folks cited the following evaluative articles:

Milstead, Jessica L. "Specifications for Thesaurus Software" *Information Processing and Management* vol 27(2/3): 165–75, 1991.

Milstead, Jessica. "Thesaurus Software Packages" *ASIS '90: Proceedings of the 53rd ASIS Annual Meeting*, Nov 4–8, 1990.

Milstead, Jessica. "Thesaurus Software Packages for Personal Computers" *Database* vol 13(6): 61–65, Dec 1990.

"Thesaurus Management Software" *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, vol 51, supp 14, pp 389-407.

NETWORK CONNECTIONS
America Online tel (800) 227-6364

CompuServe tel (800) 848-8199

Delphi tel (800) 495-4005

GEnie tel (800) 638-9636

Real/Time Communications tel (512) 459-4391

The Well tel (415) 332-35

See also Estrada, S, *Connecting to the Internet: A Buyer's Guide* Sepastopol, CA:O'Reilly & Assoc, 1993

Kantor, A. "Making On-Line Services Work for You" *PC Magazine* vol 13(5):110, March 14, 1994

Maren, M. "The Age of E-Mail" *Home Office Computing*, Dec, 1993, 63-70

Tetzeli, R. "Is Going On-Line Worth the Money?" *Fortune* vol 129(12):104-05, 108, 13 June, 1994.

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Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI)
GPO Box 1251L, Melbourne
Victoria 3001, Australia

Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada
Box 744 Station F
Toronto Ontario
Canada M4Y 2N6

National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services (NFAIS)
1429 Walnut Street
Philadelphia PA 19102
Tel (215) 563-2406
Fax: (215) 563-2848

Society of Indexers (SI)
16 Green Road, Birchington, England
CT79JZ

The Wonderful World of Indexing

Conferences
If you would like to notify AusSI members of any events, send information (including dates, venue, cost, theme and contact) to the Editor.

6 May–7 May 1995
Victorian Family History State Conference
Hosted by The Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc., The Genealogical Society of Victoria Inc. and The State Library of Victoria
VENUE: Lower Melbourne Town Hall
CONTACT: Mrs Jenny Carter, PO Box 2063, East Ivanhoe Vic 3079

12 July–15 July 1994
Australian Reading Association Conference
VENUE: Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour
CONTACT: ARA, PO Box 257, Gladesville NSW 2111, Tel/Fax (02) 878 3396

Some Comments on Membership

by Kingsley Siebel

Kingsley Siebel shares some of his thoughts on AusSI membership, and hopefully, provokes some replies.

The object of this comment is to arouse awareness of a matter of concern to the well-being of our Society and to make a few suggestions.

Between 1985 and 1988, membership grew from 157 to 185—an increase of 17.9 %. From 1989 to the end of 1992[1], the total rose to 212—an increase of 14 % in that period. These figures could make us feel smug enough to think that even if growth dropped by 4 %, numbers had still increased. But before cheering too loudly, let's look at the down-side.

A closer analysis shows that the loss of members during each of these years was almost as striking as any gain. During 1989–1992, for example, 203 new members joined the Society, but there were 173 resignations. This shows a disturbing erosion of real growth. In fact, at the end of 1991, we had 192 members, which was less than the total of 205 at the end of 1989. The decline in growth is even sharper in the most recent period of 1990–1992, because although we gained 107 new members, we lost 100.

I went another step in my analysis and found, to my horror, that there was a very short life span for many new members. The 'old stagers' were still loyal but newcomers often gave the Society away in *less than a year* of joining. For example, in New South Wales, 12 people whose names were listed as 'new' during 1990 were missing from the 1991 list of subscribers. In Victoria, the figure was 21. Again, in New South Wales, 19 'new' members listed in the course of 1991 were missing from the 1992 list. The corresponding figure for Victoria was 26. A similar pattern is evident in earlier years. The smaller States show a more hopeful record.

There will always be losses for a variety of reasons, but if any voluntary Society is unable to retain its enrolments for more than a year, something must be wrong. In view of the positive potential for new members, it is essential that a strong effort be made to arrest decline and to promote real growth. It is well known that not all indexers in Australia are members of the Society. That is not a phenomenon peculiar to this country, but because our numbers are still small, we have to make a stronger effort to maximise retention. I hope it will be possible to stir the consciousness of some who have left recently and bring them back. The Society owes much to those who have remained over the years and I feel that they will be concerned to ensure that membership grows, and that growth is maintained at a satisfactory level.

What do we do?

My first thought goes to country members who must feel isolated as it is often impractical for them to attend branch meetings. The Newsletter is their only source of contact with the Society or with other members. We can take action to make them feel wanted. The Newsletter is the most immediate source.

A useful rule for the editorial board may be the encouragement of full reports of branch meetings and speakers' notes on the subjects discussed. The Canberra Branch is commended for its consistency of reporting since it was formed. The New South Wales and Victoria Branches could follow the example set by the Canberrans. Sometimes it is difficult to report a meeting fully, but speakers may be encouraged to have a script for publication.

The Society receives exchange copies of publications of interest to indexers from the UK, USA and Canada. A brief outline of some of the practical articles published in our Society's Newsletter could be another regular feature. Copies of such articles could be circulated to those who wish to have them. (I do not think there will be any difficulty over copyright if a charge to cover postage and handling is made, and I would like to think that our sister Societies would be glad to share their thoughts with a wider audience.)

The organisation of a lending library nationally or at a branch level is another way to reach more members. How many members, for example, have ever read BS3700[2] (do I hear anyone ask, "What's that?"), and there are many useful reference books and new texts coming on stream which not all members can afford. I realise that this is not an easy venture. There will be problems, but obstacles are made to be overcome.

A membership secretary (MS) at national or branch level can work wonders if that person makes the job constructive rather than routine. We are all members of different organisations but when it comes to renewal of subscriptions there is much genuine lapse of memory before that cheque is in the mail. A phone call, a little nudge or a personal letter from the MS can make a lot of difference. We might even receive some genuine reasons from those who do not wish to continue their membership. A vigorous MS may well be able to influence more contributions to the Newsletter from country members.

In this big country it is difficult to get members together, but an effort could be made for periodic national or regional meetings. The venue for the AGM of the Society may be changed each year, and a convenient place outside the capital cities could be found. Such an event could serve more than one purpose: the Branch AGMs could coincide; there might be more input into national affairs; the Society Medal presentation and dinner could be arranged; a program of instruction and discussion could be organised; and it would provide a real opportunity for members around the country to meet and exchange ideas.

Once a year is not too much to ask capital city members to inconvenience themselves for the sake of country cousins. The forthcoming international conference in Marysville (rather than Melbourne) may be an excellent starting point for discussion and future action.

The Society is presently drawing up a questionnaire on whether there is a need to upgrade our professional status by arranging for tertiary courses in indexing. This is an eminently progressive venture. Some of the suggestions I have made may be canvassed at the same time.

I may of course be a hopeless idealist—or, we may have an opportunity to hear from some of those eminent indexers who we have in our Society.

[1] The figures quoted have been extracted from information furnished in the Newsletter. No list was published in 1993.
[2] A British Standard for indexing practices.

Kingsley Siebel

Letter to the Editor –

Locators in Limbo

Most indexers are familiar with the practice of providing subheadings in entries when the number of page references or locators exceeds seven or so. But what often puzzles me in indexes I consult is the practice of providing subheadings for some, but not all, locators. For example, this entry from the index to Hans Wellisch's *Indexing from A to Z*:

> italics, 108, 117, 118, 184, **194–196**, 322, 323, 396
>> defined 394
>> for bibliographic indicators 26
>> for (*continued*) lines 53
>> for cross-references 83, 86, 196, 207, 390

Exactly what is the status of the locators left attached to the main heading, without subdivision? Are they the most important references, to be consulted first? Or are they just passing references, not deemed worthy of subheadings? Or are they just 'general' references, whatever that means? Or do indexers use them to mean all three things, the meaning varying from indexer to indexer?

The status of these locators is obvious enough when the references appear as a span, often in bold type, indicating the major treatment of a topic, such as the entry for pages **194–196** in the example above. But the status of the other locators is ambiguous at best. They are locators in limbo.

To my mind, all of the locators following the main heading in the example above (108, 117, 118, 184, etc.) need subheadings, except the span **194–196**.

Otherwise ambiguity results. If space constraints are a reason for adopting this practice, I wonder what criterion is used to decide which lucky locators get subheadings? After all, they must all be about *something*! At worst, this practice leads to subheadings only being given to locators which refer to information well into the book; that is, once the indexer has realised that the locators are accumulating beyond the rule of thumb of seven or so.

Of course, time constraints may also force an indexer to adopt the practice, but this should at least be recognised as a compromise, not as good indexing practice. What do other readers think?

Garry Cousins

Indexes, end-of-book, condition of ... by Gerald Fowler

Typescript, 8pp., obtainable from Gerald,140 The Ridgeway, Mornington, Wellington, New Zealand, for NZ$10.

Gerald has surveyed samples of books published in New Zealand, and of internationally published books, and classified their indexes as good; bad; and not there at all. Tables provide cross-analysis, and he takes a look at the future and the electronic book.

New Members
The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr B Howarth, Gilmore, ACT
Ms A Philpott, Millgrove, Vic
Ms L Pitcher, Balwyn, Vic

Next Deadline — Friday 30 September 1994
News, views and reviews are always welcome. Floppy disks will be appreciated where articles are longer than one A4 page (preferably 3.5" Macintosh disks; Microsoft Word software; IBM is also OK).

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