Editorial

This month, we have reports by Geraldine Triffitt on the activities of the ACT Branch and a report by Elizabeth Riley on thesaurus construction in Queensland. There is also an article on a proposed National Centre for Collaborative Indexing Projects, and the second part of John Scarce's talk on indexes for genealogists. Attached to this month's Newsletter is a flyer for the First Inernational Indexers Conference, 'Indexers—Partners in Publishing', which will be held in Marysville, Victoria, from 31 March to 2 April 1995. A variety of topics will be discussed, ranging from computer-assisted indexing to language control. Speakers will include Australian and overseas experts. There will also be workshops, forums and a trade exhibtition. This event is not to be missed, so make a note in your diary now!

Rebecca Smale

ACT Region Meeting

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

Date: 15 November 1994
Time: 7.00 for 7.30 pm
Venue: Canberra Institute of Technology,School of Tourism & Hospitality, Constitution Avenue, Reid, ACT
Dinner: three-course meal plus coffee (drinks extra)
Cost: members of the Society of Indexers or the Society of Editors, $22.00. Non-members, $25.00
Bookings: Robert Hyslop, tel (06) 281 1886

Medal Dinner

The Australian Society of Indexers Medal for 1994 will be awarded at a dinner to be held on Wednesday 16 November. The name of the winner will be announced together with details of runners-up. A certificate will also be presented to the successful publishing house. The winning index entry, together with the runners-up, will be on display. The dinner includes a 3-course meal and drinks.

Venue: Graduate House
            University of Melbourne
            224 Leicester Street, Carlton Vic
Time: 7.00 for 7.30 pm
Cost: $30.00 per person (all-inclusive)
RSPV: By Tuesday 8 November 1994

Payment in advance to The Secretary, Australian Society of Indexers, GPO Box 1251, Melbourne, 3001. Please advise if a vegetarian meal is required.
For further information, contact :
   Ian Odgers: (03) 418 7275

ACT Branch Meeting Report

Max braved the freezing weather to tell us of his experiences as an independent indexer. He gave a lot of practical tips on how to start as an indexer, where to advertise and how to quote for a job over the phone. He warned us of the disadvantages of workng from home and advised us of the financial aspects of going independent. He listed three requisites necessary for success: quality of work; timeliness; and cost. His talk stimulated much discussion which continued not only during dinner at Sammy's Kitchen, but also afterwards in the carpark on a frosty Canberra night.

Geraldine Triffitt

NSW Branch Meeting Report

Thesaurus Construction in Queensland

On Friday 19 August, a group of people gathered from various Brisbane libraries at the Kelvin Grove campus of Queensland University of Technology to participate in a thesaurus construction workshop. The meeting was organised as an activity of the Queensland Group of the Cataloguers' Section of the Australian Library and Information Association. Alan Walker, President of the NSW Branch of AusSI, led the workshop. Elizabeth Riley, Committee Member of the ALIA Cataloguers' Section Queensland Group, and also a member of AusSI, provides a summary.

After giving some background information on the definition of and history of thesauri, Alan discussed the 'why and when' of thesaurus construction. He advised against undertaking the job if a well-maintained thesaurus in the subject area already exists, since thesauri are labour-intensive to produce and to maintain. An existing thesaurus may be supplemented by local terms or identifiers to improve its relevance for the project at hand.

Given the need and the commitment to produce a thesaurus, Alan recommended following the International Standard ISO 2788-1986 *Establishment and development of monolingual thesauri*, also published as a British Standard.

Alan illustrated the basic relationships forming the syndetic structure of thesauri: the Equivalence relationship (USE, UF); the Hierarchical relationship (BT, NT); and the Associative relationship (RT, RT). Then the session got down to the nitty gritty of construction: choice of term; form of term; and mapping logical relationships. It was emphasised that needs of users must be kept firmly in mind when making policy decisions about spelling, use of jargon, trade names, popular or scientific names, current or past terminology, or form of place names. Good cross-references can make the choice of preferred term less important, depending on the search software that will be used.

After lunch, small groups worked on a number of practical thesaurus construction exercises, creating hierarchies from lists of indexing terms. The irritating fact that all knowledge cannot be channelled into neat, non-overlapping categories became apparent, with methodical librarians forced to resist tendencies to squeeze terms into BT/NT relationships when RT/RT might have been more appropriate!

Another outcome from the exercise of placing library-related terms into a hierarchy was the realisation that sometimes it is better not to know too much about the topic but to let terms and relationships emerge from the literature in the field.

A final session on thesaurus maintenance dealt mainly with software to make the job easier. A good thesaurus construction software package should allow recording of decisions once only, (i.e. create the reverse relationship for any term added), prevent use of non-preferred terms and allow a clear display. Packages such as TINterm, Thes, Lexicon, Liu-Palmer Thesaurus Construction System and Picman were mentioned, varying in price and sophistication.

This was a fascinating workshop with a good mix of theory and practice, and certainly gave enough information to point would-be thesaurus constructors in the right direction. The level of interest from the library community was such that the Cataloguers' Section Queensland Group hopes to run a similar workshop or one on database indexing next year.

Elizabeth Riley

Development of a Thesaurus of Nineteenth Century Terminology and a National Centre for Collaborative Indexing Projects

The following piece is an edited version of a report which appeared in 'Crossings: International Bulletin of Australian Studies', no. 20, June 1994. It is reproduced with the kind permission of John McLaren, the Editor of 'Crossings'.

One of the main problems with indexing nineteenth century materials is the inapplicability of twentieth century terminology to nineteenth century concepts. Funding is currently being sought for a collaborative project involving the resources of both universities and major libraries to develop an online thesaurus of nineteenth century terminology, with a core of common terms, and principles for standardising headings for more specific subjects when indexing specialised journals. This will enable compatibility of terminology across different subject areas, and will facilitate both the development of collaborative projects to index priority titles, and a national database into which indexers working on a range of different projects could input their material.

The development of the thesaurus will be based on the indexes of several publications to provide a sampling of both national and regional interests. The change of terminology across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be mapped in three newspapers – the *Bulletin*, *Argus* and the *Advertiser* – spanning both periods. Where necessary, pilot projects to index sections of the newspapers will be undertaken. The thesaurus will facilitate the development of collaborative projects for the indexing of priority titles such as the *Bulletin* by teams at different universities and libraries doing different sections or spans of years using the same core terms and creating more specialised (and therefore peripheral) headings using the same guidelines.

This project will provide the pilot project for a Key Centre application in 1995 for a National Centre for Collaborative Indexing Projects to be based at the University of Adelaide.

The proposed Centre will aim to develop a bibliographic support base for future research in Australian studies. This will involve

• the development of collaborative projects to index Australian newspapers and journals
• the provision of support where requested for indexing and related projects
• the facilitation of co-operation and collaboration between libraries and academics with regard to the development and carrying out of indexing projects
• the development of a systematic exchange of relevant information between parties working on projects relevant to indexing
• the provision of a focus for fund raising for indexing and related projects

Letter to the Editor

In his letter to the editor last month, Garry Cousins pondered on the provision of subheadings for some, but not all, locators. Hans Wellisch has written this response.

Touche! Garry Cousins has hit upon one of the less exemplary entries in the index of my book, (*Indexing from A–Z*), that is, one of the instances in which I have not been taking my own medicine. However, the entire page 221 of my book is devoted to a discussion of the problem raised by Mr Cousins, and if he had read the introductory note to the index he would have discovered the rationale underlying my use of undifferentiated locators after a modified heading, namely

> Locators in roman type following a modified main heading indicate minor topical differences.

This shows, by the way, that even indexers do not read introductory notes to indexes, so what can we expect from other readers? Hazel Bell once called such notes "sacred cows" not worth the effort to put into their formulation, but on the other hand, I recently read a book written by reference librarians for their fellow practitioners, in which the index had locators in italics. These, however, did not indicate illustrations but referred to bibliographic references at the end of the book (just before the index). No note to that effect preceded the index, and it took me a while to figure out what those italicised locators meant. So perhaps we do need introductory notes for any features in an index that are not quite straightforward.

Hans H Wellisch

Indexes for Genealogists—Part 2

by John Scarce

John Scarce is a Genealogical Research Officer at the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The first part of his paper, which was presented tat the Melbourne General Meeting on 10 August 1994, was published in last month's issue of the Newsletter. In the second part, John discusses the Victorian Pioneers Index.

The Victorian Pioneers Index is sorted into alphabetical order by surname. Within surnames, the sorting is by given name. Within given names, the sorting is by event—in order of births, marriages, deaths. Within event, the sorting is by year. Hyphens are disregarded, and in the surname field, 'MC' is treated as though it is spelt 'MAC', and 'ST' is treated as though it is spelt 'SAINT'.

The listing of those events where the surname is recorded as 'Unknown' has been split into two sections. The first group appears out of its correct sequence because the information was originally indexed under 'U' which was later expanded by the computer program to `UNKNOWN'. Unfortunately, after the expansion, the data was not re-sorted to integrate both groups.

There are still a few non-alpha characters at the ends of both given names and surnames in spite of the various programs that were run on the data. This means that if you cannot locate a particular person in the index, look at the end of the surname sort or at the end of a particular given name sort just in case the entry has been sorted out of sequence because, for example, there may have been a fullstop after a given name. An extra space between words can also cause a name to be sorted out of its correct sequence.

Abbreviations are used throughout the Victorian Pioneers Index. There was no standardised system in use last century, consequently, many of the place name abbreviations are difficult to identify and sometimes refer to areas which no longer exist. The Municipal Directories are a great help in this regard as many parish names correspond with the names of the old townships and mining areas. Another great help is Les Blake's *Placenames of Victoria*, which is available on microfiche. The only positive way to find out an abbreviation, however, is to purchase the certificate.

Where abbreviations occur in given names, the names are sorted letter by letter, so always remember to be aware of possible abbreviations to the given name when you are searching a list of surnames. If you are searching for a 'William SMITH', for example, 'SMITH William' will be many frames removed from 'SMITH Wm'.

With the type of sorting that I have described it is often possible to find whole families grouped together on the same microfiche and it is here that the benefits of searching via the Victorian Pioneers Index really begin to show.

Remembering that the Index covers the period 1837–1888, it is easy to do a scan and note all of the children registered to a particular set of parents, including the death entries of any child that died. Children who died were sometimes omitted from the list of previous issue appearing on the birth entries of subsequent children. Thus, it is possible to discover previously unknown siblings. Second and third marriages of a relative are also surprises which may lie in store for some of you.

Another factor which may emerge is variation in the spelling of surnames. Some of the variations are not obvious and the surname for which you are looking might be under a totally different letter of the alphabet, for example, the names 'EARLY' and 'HURLEY'.

The Victorian Pioneers Index is also available on CD-ROM. The revised edition of the CD-ROM has now been released which has several improvements when compared to the original disk, including a new version of the software, the ability to search on the age at death, and the ability to search by registration number. Also included are the places of birth of the parties in the Marriage Index for the period 1865–1888, if known.

With the CD-ROM we are no longer restricted to searching only by the surname. We now have the flexibility to search the index using, for example, a given name, the names of the father, mother or spouse, the places of birth or death (if they are noted), and for the Early Church Records, the denominations and parishes. We can also search by the mother's maiden name.

Searching on the mother's maiden surname in the Birth or Death Index can also be of help in tracing the married names of daughters of your ancestors where you are not able to find a marriage entry for them.

A valuable feature of the CD-ROM is the system of look-up tables which are of great assistance when dealing with abbreviated names or surname variations. Always truncate the spelling and enter a question mark, then choose those variants which could relate to your particular name. If, for example, in the place name field you entered 'WILLIAMSTOWN', the computer would only match with those entries having the name spelt in full. By entering 'WI?', however, the computer will generate a look-up table of all of the place names beginning with the letters 'WI'. This way, the various abbreviations of 'WILLIAMSTOWN' would also be picked up.

The great advantage of the Pioneers Index series is that instead of having to search on a yearly basis, the indexes are now consolidated into one alphabetical sequence for easier searching.

The Registry is continuing the process of index consolidation by beginning work on the next stage. This index has been termed the Federation Index and will cover births, deaths and marriages for the period 1889–1913, and it will be in the same format as the Victorian Pioneers Index and will also be released on CD-ROM as well as on microfiche.

For genealogists, this Index will cover a most important period. Children born in the late 1860s matured and had families of their own. It was also the period when many of the Gold Rush era immigrants died: their death certificates represent the final chapters in the lives of our earliest forebears.

Volunteers who would like to work on the preparation of the Federation Index should contact the Genealogical Society of Victoria or the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies. Volunteers need access to a microfiche reader as well as to a personal computer so that the data entry can be done in their own homes.

A new computer program has been written by Bruce Fullarton of the GUM Group of the Genealogical Society of Victoria and there will not be the scope for typographical errors that there was for the entry of data in the Pioneers Index. Guidelines have been drawn up and given to each volunteer to ensure uniformity in the data process and they are being instructed to key in exactly what appears on the microfiche. Proofreading of the keyed records against the original registrations minimises typographical errors.

There are some 1.6 million entries to be keyed in and then verified, so it will take a considerable amount of time before the project is completed.

During the proofreading stage it is possible to see the causes of many of the errors which have been made. One of the most common mistakes is mixing up the occupation and surname. In the new index there will be fewer people named 'COOK', 'BAKER' or 'MASON'.

The current project also highlights different interpretations of names as noted on the original indexes when compared to the actual registration certificates. Examples are the recording of a given name as 'LORN' instead of as 'TOM', and the recording of a surname as 'GOODE' instead of as 'BOOTH'.

For the first time, it is also possible to see the degree to which the same registration numbers have been inadvertently written into the Index more than once in any given year, causing many duplicate numbers to be found.

If we make a comparison between the original Indexes and the Victorian Pioneers Index, in many cases it is easy to see how some of the data entry errors occurred. Although civil registration was made compulsory in July 1853, many events, especially in the earlier years, were never

registered and therefore do not appear in the Victorian Pioneers Index. We must be careful to distinguish between index entries which people *claim* to be missing from the Victorian Pioneers Index when compared to the original indexes and those events which were *never registered*.

Alternatively, some entries that people regard as missing may actually be in the Index, but under a variant spelling of the surname and/or given name. These entries are ones which could possibly be found using the CD-ROM—it is possible to search by registration number, so if you have a certificate but cannot find the entry in the Pioneers Index, you will now be able to see how the data has been entered.

Another point to remember is that if the original index entry was incorrect and the error was noted and then corrected as part of the work done on the Pioneers Index, then the incorrect entry will obviously be regarded as missing on the new Index, when compared to the original.

It is also worth remembering that in the Deaths Index, many of the so-called 'missing' deaths will be registered under the surname of `UNKNOWN', so it is not possible to link them positively to any person whose death entry you cannot locate.

If you cannot find a particular person in the Index, do not give up straight away but engage in a bit of lateral thinking. I have listed some points to consider when using the Indexes.

• Try to determine possible variants in the spelling It often helps to have a knowledge of keyboard layout in order to be able to anticipate which keys may have been accidentally hit.

• Remember that surname spelling was very fluid and your family name may have been entered in a number of ways. Many families could not read or write, and if they spoke to the District Registrar in a strong accent, their names may have been recorded incorrectly.

• Look for all possible abbreviations in given names especially when using the Victorian Pioneers Index.

• Remember to use the Guidebooks when looking through the Consolidated Indexes for 1896 to 1940.

• When looking for the death entry of a widow, always consider the fact that she may have re-married.

• The person who you are seeking may have been adopted. Legal adoption did not commence in Victoria until the passing of the 1928 *Adoption of Children Act* and the first adoption was registered on 14 October 1929. Before this date, adoptions were often done privately through a solicitor and, of course, there were many cases of fostering. The Registry has all Deed Polls enacted to November 1986 when the new change of name legislation came into effect. It must be remembered that most Deed Polls date from about 1913 and that there are very few records prior to this.

Legitimation of children born out of wedlock commenced in April 1903 with new birth registration entries which recorded the details of the subsequent marriage of the parents.

Any late or re-registrations of births will appear in the original Index with the letter 'X' after the registration number. The year of re-registration will be found in the place of birth column. In the Victorian Pioneers Index, the year of late registration or re-registration appears in the extreme right-hand column following the 'X' after the registration number.

In the handwritten Indexes, late registrations or re-registrations of births are either squeezed in between two index entries, often with the registration number in the centre of the page, or else they were written at the bottom of a page with an asterisk indicating their proper position in the Index. Such entries can easily be overlooked by researchers.

When searching in the Deaths Index from the early 1950s to the end of Issue 7, it must also be borne in mind that surnames beginning with 'MAC' are listed under 'MC. The surname 'MACE', for example, becomes 'MCE', and 'MACHIN' becomes 'MCHIN'.

<div align="right">

John Scarce
To be concluded next month in the third and final instalment.

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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.

8 November–10 November 1994
National Electronic Records Management Conference
VENUE: Hyatt Hotel, Canberra, ACT
CONTACT: Mr Ron Terry, Conference Co-ordinator, Australian Archives, PO Box 34, Dickson ACT 2601, Tel (06) 209 3936, Fax (06) 209 3931

13 November 1994
History of the Book in Australia (HOBA) and Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) Seminar/Workshop
VENUE: State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic
CONTACT: For bookings, contact Brian Hubber, Rare Books Librarian, State Library of Victoria, Tel (03) 669 9032, Fax (03) 669 9012. For other inquiries, contact Wallace Kirsop, Monash University, Clayton Vic 3168, Tel (03) 905 2217, Fax (03) 905 2137

28 November–29 November 1994
Electronic Messaging
VENUE: Boulevard Hotel, 90 William St, Sydney NSW 2000
COST: $1395
CONTACT: IIR Pty Ltd, Level 9, 33 Berry St, North Sydney NSW 2060, Tel (02) 954 5844, Fax (02) 959 4684

31 January–2 February 1995
Online 95: Seventh Information Online and On Disc Conference
VENUE: Sydney Convention Centre, NSW
CONTACT: Australian Convention Management, Tel (02) 332 4622, Fax (02) 332 4066

31 March–2 April 1995
Indexers—Partners in Publishing: First International Conference
VENUE: Marysville, Vic
CONTACT: Margaret Findlay, Conference Organiser, 3a Goodall St, Hawthorn Vic 3122, Tel/Fax (03) 818 1760

New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mrs S Henderson, Wanniassa, ACT
Mrs J Pollett, Turramurra, NSW
Mr C Roberts, Bentley, WA
Mr D Morgan, Brighton, Vic

Next Deadline—Friday 25 Nov 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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