



Australian Society of Indexers **NEWSLETTER**

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Editorial

In this issue John Simkin contributes an article for discussion on a Code of Practice for Indexers. As an interesting comparison, the latest Code of Conduct for Indexers from the Society of Indexers' newsletter, *The Indexer*, is also included. The March issue features 'Indexing in the Electronic Age' Conference details and registration brochure, Dwight Walker's Web Prize Competition Part 3, Garry Cousin's Cindex Tip on finding patterns, and a Letter to the Editor from Robert Hyslop in praise of the compiled conference proceedings, which were edited by Max McMaster. The ACT Branch advise members of their AGM and Dinner.

Ann Philpott, Editor

INDEXING IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE

**A Conference for the
Information Industry
20-21 April 1996**

The ACT Branch of the Australian Society of Indexers in conjunction with the NSW Branch of the Society is organising this conference which is directed to all people in

the information industry whether they are indexers, editors, publishers or users.

The conference will provide insights into the implications for the information industry of indexing in the electronic age. The speakers will be a range of specialists able to provide diverse perspectives. Interesting debates are anticipated.

A highlight of the conference will be the Conference Dinner, being arranged by the NSW Branch, when full details of the judging and the names of the highly commended indexers and others whose indexes were on the short list for the AusSI Medal will be announced.

The venue for the conference is Ranelagh House, a charming guest house dating from the 1920s and located in the small town of Robertson in the picturesque NSW Southern Tablelands, now famous as the location of the movie *Babe*.

Full details of the conference are available in the brochure included with this newsletter. Further information is available from Shirley Campbell:

Phone (06) 234 2225 Fax (06) 234 2237

Email

Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au

If you need a lift to Robertson from Sydney, please phone Lorraine Doyle on (02) 876 4218 or fax (02) 888 2229.

VICTORIANS Help Needed for mailout of *Indexers Available* 1995/96

If you are willing to help me with the mailout of *Indexers Available* 1995/96 to publishers and members on any of the days over Easter (5 - 8 April), please call Ann Philpott on 9830 0494.

VENUE: (Front unit) 1/6 Scheele Street
Surrey Hills Vic. 3127

Alternatively, if you would like to help either on another day shortly after Easter or from the comfort of your own lounge, please call me and I can despatch a batch to you with addresses.

Code of Practice for Indexers

At the International Conference in Marysville there was a general discussion session on the ethics of indexing where a resolution was passed to formulate a code of practice for Australian indexers. The following notes are intended to open the subject for discussion by members of AusSI.

Any profession needs a statement of its goals on which to build its body of theoretical and practical knowledge as well as the rules which may be applied to the practice of the profession under particular conditions.

Until the profession can demonstrate these clearly it will not be able to present itself effectively for acceptance by the wider community with substantial courses of study and acceptance of its practitioners.

'Indexing' is not a precise term as used by professional indexers. It includes traditional 'back-of-book' indexes, databases, indexing of non-print materials and, to some, such activities as library cataloguing and subject bibliography. Thus a code should define the area which is covered by this loose term and its relationship to other areas of activity.

The useful definition of 'indexing' for the purpose of creating a code will be one which views it as the analysis of knowledge with the allocation of verbal or other descriptions to make it accessible as quickly and precisely as possible. With this definition in mind it can be accepted that those indexers who develop more effective methods for this work and those who make it their business to know about such developments are being more 'ethical' than those who use methods which do the job less effectively. This is not just a matter of being up to the minute with the latest equipment or system because older methods may be more effective in some cases. The well-equipped indexer will be able to judge such questions.

Like any profession indexing has a broad ethical base. The statement of this base must precede any codification of rules; they will only be valid to the extent that, at any time, they assist the achievement of the

goal(s) set by the broad statement. Herein lies the distinction between ethics - those principles which describe the unchanging goals of the enterprise or field of endeavour - and morals - those dos and don'ts which relate to particular time and circumstances and which need to be reviewed and revised as circumstances change.

The statement of the ethical base of indexing will assume it to be part of the area which includes the recording, preservation and retrieval of knowledge. (It is important to relate it to knowledge rather than to the more limited field of information, i.e. packaged knowledge. Information is governed to some extent by fashion and information is defined by that which is objective, almost entirely neglecting the larger field of subjective knowledge. Of course, information is easier to index; its concepts are more susceptible to being codified in precise terms and, being driven to some extent by fashion, its thesauri can be limited to that which is 'needed' by the user group or the demands of the time. On the other hand, knowledge is a vast field, its interrelationships are extremely complex, in its recorded forms its resources are immense and the range of concepts which need to be identified in 'indexing' it is almost infinite.)

The awareness of the size and significance of what we are involved in is a necessary background to the effective practice of our profession. We share this with others in the 'knowledge' professions - teachers, journalists, publishers, librarians, information technologists and others.

A statement of principle based on the above would be to the effect that the principal responsibility of indexers is to use their skills to make knowledge as widely and readily accessible as possible. Of course in the practice of their profession indexers will frequently be required to do jobs of information indexing. This work needs to be carried out with regard to the broader principle. A simple example of the validity of this approach is provided by the situation in some libraries where reference librarians are put to indexing tasks to produce in-house tools with no consideration of their use in the wider world. On a pragmatic basis it may not be possible at first to produce a product which enhances access to a field of knowledge for all users but, the

'ethical' indexer will try to structure the work so as to invite future expansion and to make such future development as easy and effective as possible or, at least to provide for the product to take its place in some co-operative venture.

The individual clauses in a code can be worked out by reference to the above points and a consideration of the conditions which practising indexers experience at the present time. Since indexers work in a variety of situations it cannot be assumed that rules can be made with universal application and some of the clauses may need to specify the situations to which they apply, e.g. it may be useful to put in clauses which apply to freelance workers which could not apply to an indexer employed in a publishing house or library.

The following essay in forming a code is offered as a basis for discussion:

1. Definition

* An indexer's field of activity is the analysis of recorded knowledge and the assignment of descriptors used in the identification and retrieval of knowledge on subjects and in forms as it is needed. The 'end product' of an indexer's work is an index - self-contained and complete or 'open-ended' and on-going.

2. Characteristics of the indexer

* The indexer will have an understanding of Knowledge as it is and can be created, investigated, learned, recorded, manipulated, transmitted and used. The indexer will have an understanding of the branches of Knowledge and their relationships.

* The indexer will have the ability to view all expressions of knowledge and opinion objectively without interposing personal opinions or prejudices.

* The indexer will resist all actions designed to censor, distort or falsify knowledge or to confuse knowingly, objective and subjective realities.

* The indexer will undertake those studies both formal and personal which provide an understanding of the general principles and

specific techniques of indexing; this will be an ongoing process.

* The indexer who wishes to practise in particular subject fields will acquire knowledge of, and keep up-to-date in those fields.

* The indexer will support the professional associations which are dedicated to ensuring high professional standards.

* The indexer will recognise the value of work in this profession and will be diligent in ensuring that it is suitably recognised and rewarded. Where competitive tendering for work is involved the indexer will compete on the basis of skills, effective techniques, ability to meet deadlines and other criteria which do not degrade the value of the professional work involved.

* The indexer will conscientiously carry out all contractual obligations entered into as a salaried employee or freelancer.

* The indexer will create and maintain a professional rapport with his clients or employers to the end that all contracts are entered into and fulfilled on the basis of clearly understood requirements.

* The indexer will acquaint him/herself with the requirements of contract, copyright and other law affecting the profession.

* The indexer will accept the right and responsibility to work for the improvement of professional conditions, including remuneration, working conditions and benefits, legal provisions affecting the profession, study opportunities and opportunities for professional association.

The above is presented in the hope that members will feel moved to comment, criticize, argue, discuss or even approve. It will be placed on the agenda of a National Committee meeting. The Committee may wish to adopt some more formal means of pursuing the subject.

Since writing the above, a code passed and approved by the Society of Indexers(U.K.) has come to hand. It appears that the Society of Indexers has adopted a somewhat different approach to that which I have suggested above. The Society may

also adopt a code of practice for publishers in their dealings with indexers. This has yet to be discussed.

John E. Simkin

Code of Conduct for Indexers

8th draft amendments following discussion at the AGM
from the Society of Indexers Newsletter, Third quarter 1995

An Indexer should:

1. Support the aims and the objectives of the Society of Indexers in order to ensure continuing high standards of indexing.
2. Achieve and maintain competence in professional indexing practice.
3. Keep up to date with the development of knowledge in his/her chosen subject.
4. Compile an index to a text on a specialist subject with adequate knowledge of the specialism and competence to deal with the intellectual level of the text under consideration.
5. Be objective and avoid all bias and prejudice. Choice and tone of entries should reflect the text.
6. Discuss requirements with the client, establish harmonious relations, and follow the agreed specification, explaining details of indexing with which the client may not be familiar.
7. Handle in a polite and equable manner problems, queries and complaints which may arise during the compilation of an index.
8. Adhere to the agreed date for the delivery of a commissioned index; inform the client immediately of any problems which may affect prompt delivery.
9. Be aware that she/he is entitled to assert moral and/or economic rights in accordance with the Copyright Act 1988
10. Negotiate a fair and appropriate fee for a commissioned index, and decline an

unrealistic fee unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Next Newsletter deadline:

Tuesday 19 March 1996

Contributions and letters to the Editor are always welcome

Floppy disks will be appreciated where articles are longer than one A4 page. My computer only accepts formatted 3.5" Macintosh Microsoft Word Version 4.00D disks. I do not have easy access to fax or email. Please send all contributions to:

The Editor
Ann Philpott
1/6 Scheele Street
Surrey Hills, Vic. 3127

ACT Branch Annual General Meeting and Dinner

The ACT Annual General Meeting and Dinner will be held at 7.00pm on 26 March 1996 at the Italian Club, 78 Franklin Street, Forrest.

The guest speaker will be Susan Prentice of the Australian National University and her talk will be a forerunner to the conference, 'Indexing in the Electronic Age'. The conference is to be held at Robertson NSW on 20-21 April 1996. Contact Shirley Campbell:
Ph (06) 234 2225 fax (06) 234 2237 Email
Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au

Web Indexing Prize Part 3 Building a bibliography

This is the final instalment of creating a Web index.

Sifting and Searching to Construct the Index

In this stage, we are building an index of URLs from around the world. Create a hierarchical bibliography. Pick a subject area to index, e.g. music. See what already exists. Have a look in our 'indexing the internet' page to sample possible subject areas.

Established Virtual Libraries as Examples

W3 organisation has a virtual library including a whole area on astronomy. This cross links to all the Australian CSIRO astronomy sites out here, although it resides in Switzerland. Instead of duplicating, create links to an existing hierarchy in your index. In most of these large indexes, the first thing you will notice is that the subject headings are very broad - astronomy, education, music, engineering, science.

Using People's Home Pages as Sources of Index Entries

Being a librarian, I often find material on the internet which is heavily biased towards academics in a postgraduate vein. This needs to be filtered out. Rarely will you find a narrower term. The only times you will find really 'in depth' data is on the home page of someone doing their thesis. We are moving into untapped territory here. You could create a niche.

When talking about possible classification schemes of the internet, Mike Middleton from QUT at the Marysville International Conference mentioned that user's home pages were a simple index. People have chosen links to pages relevant to their interests. I have visited some home pages found via Webcrawler and they go on for pages. They can include pages of people's buddies, Microsoft, Intel and the US Federal Government.

The Paper Chase: Building a Bibliography of Organisations

Using **meta-indexes** I traced several organisations' Web pages including OCLC, BIOSIS and Defence Information. This formed a mini bibliography of organisations relevant to indexing and abstracting organisations. A meta-index is an index of indexes, a master list. To find these meta-indexes you use the paper chase mentality such as that which is used when researching a paper or finding a book for a client in a public library. Using bibliographies from seminal papers you can fabricate an entire area within a few hours.






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DATA CONVERSION for CINDEX and MACREX

   users   

If you use CINDEX or MACREX for your indexing, and need to revise a previous index that exists only as a text file in a word-processing format like Word or WordPerfect, you can now have that text file converted into records which can be imported directly into CINDEX or MACREX.

Or if you are cumulating indexes, you can have your old indexes in word-processing formats converted into DAT files (for CINDEX) or MBK files (for MACREX), and then merge them easily in CINDEX or MACREX.

Most popular word processing formats can be converted: WordPerfect, MS Word, RTF files, WordStar, and plain ASCII files. Rates are \$35 per hour and a quotation is provided before conversion. For more details contact:

Garry Cousins
2/27 Whatmore Street, Waverton NSW 2060
Telephone/fax (02) 9955 1525

The search engine I used for this was not Webcrawler as it contains too much sporadic information. Instead I used the Telstra 'server' search engine. This only carries site names, e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics, not sites with just Bureau in their name like Webcrawler and other WAIS search engines!

Conclusion

So from these searches and browsing sessions, you will find some valuable leads. You start to create a bibliography of URLs which are relevant to your topic. It is an **information base**. As a tip, in order to keep track of the sites you want to remember, use Netscape's rudimentary bookmark facility.

It may be even worth your while getting a piece of paper and start mapping the hypertext world of the Web. Later when you start creating these kind of bibliographies for clients, you can tailor and improve them with feedback from your users. Specialised indexes can be created by dropping or demoting useless links. Added cross-references can be made using your new skills with HTML Writer.

You have started to produce a growing index to create a pathway through the internet's information soup. There has definitely been an information explosion this century.

So, decide on an interesting topic to hunt, start using your existing indexing software to build an index, use WEBIX to create a Web page from your index, use an HTML editor to touch it up - a relatively fast low cost link to the internet (or switch the graphics off on your browser) to hone your Web surfing - and voila! A Web index emerges!

Best of luck!

Surf's up!

Dwight Walker

CINDEX Tip N° 10

Getting started with patterns

Finding simple text: a command like

FIND/PATTERN Austral

will find records which contain the sequence of letters "Austral". So *Australia*, *Australasia*, *Australian*, *Australians*, etc, but not *australis*, or *australopithecus*, because searches for patterns are *always* case sensitive.

Using ?: a question mark stands for any character. The command

FIND/PATTERN r?b

will find *rab*, *reb*, *rib*, *rob*, *rub*, *grab*, *rebuild*, *dribble*, *problem*, *grub*, etc.

Using []: if you enclose a set of characters within square brackets CINDEX will find a match to any *one* of the characters in the brackets. For example:

FIND/PATTERN 198[345]

will find records which contains any of the sequences *1983*, *1984*, or *1985*. Ranges of contiguous characters can be indicated with hyphens. For example, the command FIND/PATTERN [A-Z] will find every upper case letter, and FIND/PATTERN 198[1-3] will find *1981*, *1982* and *1983*.

So, for example, to check that the text of your *see also* references always begins with a capital letter you could give this command which will find any that do *not*:

FIND/PATTERN see also [a-z]

If you have a tip for other CINDEX users, or a problem, write to the Newsletter or contact Garry Cousins Phone/fax (02) 9955 1525

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

1995 AusSI Conference Proceedings

I was disappointed that I was unable to attend the conference at Marysville in March-April last year, so it has been a special joy to receive the report of its proceedings.

I write to compliment the editor Max McMaster and all concerned in the production of the report. It is an excellent work.

I am especially glad to note that the proceedings are indexed - a regrettably rare thing in conference reports. I soon came to appreciate that it is a good index.

In the absence of an Australian journal of indexing or a home-grown text-book of indexing, the proceedings make a brave start in documenting Australian thinking about some of the issues in indexing, and especially those of high current interest.

This fine volume warrants wide distribution, and not only to conference participants.

Robert Hyslop ISO
24 January 1996

'Indexers - Partners in Publishing' Conference Papers

* 248 pages

* **members' price:**

Victoria \$29.50 (\$22.50 plus postage and handling \$7.00)

Outside Victoria \$31.50 (\$22.50 plus postage and handling \$9.00)

* **non-members' price:**

Victoria \$42.00 (\$35.00 plus postage and handling \$7.00)

Outside Victoria \$44.00 ((\$35.00 plus postage and handling \$9.00)

* **Make cheque payable to:**

Australian Society of Indexers

* **Mail to:**

Conference Proceedings,
Australian Society of Indexers,
GPO Box 1251,
Melbourne Vic. 3001

Indexers Available 1995-96

The new edition of *Indexers Available* will shortly be available, and copies will be distributed free to publishing houses throughout Australia who provide work for indexers.

The cost to others is \$15 per copy. Please make cheques payable to:
Australian Society of Indexers
and post to:
Indexers Available,
Australian Society of Indexers,
GPO Box 1251,
Melbourne, VIC 3001

New and Rejoined Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Ms J. Banfield, Chidlow, WA
Mrs A. Burke, Malvern, Vic.
Ms J. Carrington, Williamstown, Vic.
Ms K. Collins, Wellington, NZ
Mr I. Dorum, Hawthorn, Vic.
Ms B. Edwards, Charnwood, ACT
Ms C. Ellson, Burwood, Vic.
Ms M. Gardner, Ensay, Vic.
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Mr S. Watt, East Geelong, Vic.
Ms P. Whitten, Watson, ACT
Mrs Gek Wong, Ormond, Vic.
Ms T. Wooldridge, Queanbeyan, NSW

and the following rejoined members:

Mrs S. Ridley, Geary's Gap, NSW
Mr R. Hawcroft, Ashmore, Qld

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Advertising rates

AusSI Newsletter

Full page: \$80

Half page: \$40

Quarter page: \$20

AusSI Indexers Available 1995/96

Full page: \$100

The Indexer (UK)

Full page: 120 pounds sterling

Half page: 80 pounds sterling

Quarter page: 55 pounds sterling

Eighth page: 35 pounds sterling

There is a special order form to be completed when lodging advertisements in

The Indexer. For order form and copy

deadlines, please contact: Janet Shuter,

Hon. Editor, The Old Chapel, Kings Rd,

Bembridge, Isle of Wight, UK. PO35 5NB

email: Shuter@cix.compulink.co.uk