



# Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter

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## **Skills and characteristics of, and services provided by, professional indexers.**

*Prepared by Penny Whitten and Laurelle Tunks. Based on an evening workshop held by the Canberra Branch.*

On 31 March 1998 the Canberra Branch held a supper workshop to consider *inter alia* the critical services provided by indexers and to compile a working list of essential skills and characteristics of professional indexers. The exercise was conducted with a view to preparing a guide for publishers and for those with a possible interest in pursuing a career as a professional indexer.

Overall workshop participants recognised a significant difference in the specific tasks performed by, and the final output of, back-of-book and database indexers. However they did identify a number of skills and traits common to the two professional groups. The following is a synthesis of their findings. It is hoped that other branches will take up the cudgel and build on, or perhaps corroborate these summaries.

### **Professional indexers: Who are they? What do they do?**

Do you need an indexer? Professional indexers can provide a range of services, including, but not exclusively:

#### **Services provided**

##### **Back-of-book indexers**

- Preparation of indexes which meet publisher's specifications such as timing, size, style.
- Assist in meeting publication schedules.
- Provide access points for users/readers.
- Quality control of full text – proofreading/editing/presentation.

##### **Database indexers**

- Secondary publishing/document surrogates.
- Bibliographic control.
- Preparation of abstracts.
- Quality control: proofreading/editing.
- Selection of sources – identification of new sources and of obsolete or redundant sources.
- Thesaurus enhancement and development.
- Database development, planning and marketing.

Interested in pursuing a career as a professional indexer? While the specific tasks involved and the final products vary depending on whether the focus is back-of-book,

database or metadata indexing, professional indexers find they have a number of essential skills and characteristics in common, including:

### **Skills:**

#### **Essential**

- Strong analytical and conceptual skills and ability to synthesise complex ideas concisely.
- Excellent reading comprehension skills.
- Ability to meet deadlines (time management skills).
- Ability to identify with users' perspectives.
- Ability to adhere to local rules (e.g. use of thesaurus, standards, publishers' guidelines).
- Consistency and accuracy.
- Good communication skills.
- Knowledge of information retrieval processes.
- Proofreading and editorial skills.
- Sound linguistic skills (fine grasp of grammar, style and so on).

#### **Desirable**

- Negotiation and consultation skills.
- Broad IT skills.
- Specific subject knowledge and/or above average breadth and depth of general knowledge.

### **Personal characteristics**

- Logical approach to issues and organisation of material.
- Flexibility/adaptability.
- Objectivity/impartiality.
- Fast working.
- Attentive to detail.
- Ability to work in isolation.
- Professional integrity.
- Intuitive sense of design and organisation.

## **What's Inside**

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# Noticeboard

## New members

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Ross Gilham, Vic  
Jennifer Ireland, NSW  
Tony Large, Tas  
Sharon Szeto, NSW  
Gary Weston, Vic

and congratulations to those who are newly registered:

Ross Gilham, Vic  
Jennifer Ireland, NSW  
Gary Weston, Vic

## NSW Branch

The NSW Branch Committee is proposing to run a half day seminar or workshop in August this year. The topics have not been finalised but will include a session conducted by Lynn Farkas on 'What is Indexing' as part of the research topic on the core and peripheral skills of indexing which the ACT Branch is undertaking.

Neale Towart has agreed to become an official member of the NSW Branch Committee.

The NSW Branch Committee has agreed to a request from the National Executive to take over the management of *Indexers Available*, and has established a subcommittee to investigate rationalisation of the various databases currently used by the Society.

NSW Branch Committee meetings are open to any NSW AusSI members who wish to attend. The next meeting will be held on 12 June 1998 at 32A Ross Crescent, Blaxland. Please phone the Secretary, Madeleine Davis (02 4787 6277) if you wish to attend.

## Dates for your diary

NSW Branch Committee meeting	12 June
ASTC on Writing for the Web	24th June
Vic branch 'What is indexing?'	6th July
NSW Society of Editors	7th July
ACT Christmas in Winter	28 July
UNSW Indexing Web pages course	mid-Aug
Society of Indexers (UK) conference	9-11 Oct

## Victorian Branch public meeting

### What is indexing

This is the title of a research project being undertaken by the ACT Branch (see page 1). They have asked each of the state branches to hold discussion groups on the core and peripheral skills of indexers, with the view towards producing a guide to indexing services for interested parties (potential indexers, potential clients etc.).

The basis for this work is wide consultation among AusSI members, to gain consensus from practitioners about what categories of indexing they undertake, if and how these differ from each other, and what various indexing jobs entail. The ACT Branch has provided guidelines and focus questions to spur on the discussion.

The Victorian Branch felt it would be helpful to have a panel of indexers who could share their expertise and experiences both in the marketing of their services (e.g. How did your clients find you? How did you arrange contracts and quotes?), and in the delivery of the finished product (e.g. Do you use a computer program? Did receiving the Society's commendation of Medal or Certificate attract more work?).

So we have invited Dorothy Prescott (maps and cartographic works), Geraldine Suter (newspapers) and John Simkin (books and bibliographies) to tell us all how they go about their indexing work and then we hope to turn the floor over to the audience for more comment and questions. Do come along and join in—we would love to hear your views.

Date and time: Monday 6th July at 6 for 6.30 pm (light refreshments served).

Venue : ACER (Aust.Council of Educational Research) 19 Prospect Hill Rd., Camberwell (close to junction of Burke Rd., parking behind shops, easy access to tram or Camberwell Railway Station)

Contact person : Jenny Restarick  
tel. (BH) 03 9545 2178 (AH) 03 9528 2539  
Fax 03 9528 2539  
email - jenny.restarick@enquiries.csiro.au

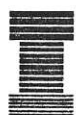
## From the Webmaster

### New Mailing List: ALIAIndexers

*aliaINDEXERS* is a new electronic mailing list for Australians involved in indexing. Details on our Web site at <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi>

## ACT branch Christmas in Winter

Yulefest dinner and speaker on 28 July.



# Noticeboard

## Tech. Communicators: Web design

At the next meeting of the Australian Society of Technical Communicators on Wednesday 24 June, Jonathan Jerney (AusSI webmaster) will be talking about *Writing for the Web—the hows and whys*. Jonathan will give an overview of what's involved in putting technical documents on the Internet and getting people to read them. He will also talk about page enhancements, what works and what doesn't, metadata and searching, and building up a following.

The meeting starts at 6:00 pm for 6:30 pm at ABC building in Harris Street, Ultimo (about 200 metres from Broadway).

Cost is \$15.00 for non-members (includes wine and finger food). Please book by Monday 22 June by contacting Jonica at the ASTC office on (02) 9211 6590, or email: paramor@ozemail.com.au.

## Society of Indexers (UK) conference

The Society of Indexers' (UK) conference *Bracing Up to Indexing: a Conference by the Sea* will be held in Tynemouth, England from 9-11 October 1998. The conference focus is practical, including electronic indexing (CD-ROMs and the Web), 'transnational' indexing, and business and health issues. Nancy Mulvaney will be speaking.

Bookings to Audrey Judkins, Treasurer, on 01429 274731 (with UK prefix). More details from the Editor.

## Society of Editors (NSW)

### Children's books

The speaker for the NSW Society of Editors' monthly meeting on Tuesday 7 July is Robin Morrow. Robin's topic is Publishing and Editing for Young Readers. She will discuss the current state of children's book publishing and the special challenges children's literature poses for editors. Robin Morrow is a well-known children's book reviewer, awards judge, critic and editor.

The talk begins at 6.30 p.m. at the Rooftop Function Centre, 4th floor, Australian Museum, William St, Sydney CBD. Cost is \$15 for non-members (includes drinks and light eats). Please book by Friday 3 July to (02) 9294 4999 (voicemail) or to (02) 9130 8331.

## APA Seminars 1998

The Australian Publishers Association will be running the following courses in 1998.

*Permissions for tertiary publishers*, Sydney 18 June, morning seminar.

*Rights as revenue—Straight to the bottom line*, Sydney 17 July, Melbourne 31 July.

*Editing skills for non-editorial staff* (am) and *Introduction to production* (pm). July, Melbourne and Sydney.

*Making a marketing plan work*, Melbourne 3 August.

*Management series*. Three one day seminars over July, August and September. Melbourne and Sydney.

For further program information contact the APA (Australian Publishers Association) on (02) 9281 9788, email [apa@magna.com.au](mailto:apa@magna.com.au).

## UNSW Indexing courses

The School of Information, Library and Archive Studies at the University of NSW is developing two new one-day workshops on *Indexing Web Pages*, and *Indexing Images*.

The *Indexing Web Pages* course will run in August. It will examine the skills of subject analysis, evaluation and annotation and their application to Web pages. The concepts of metadata and subject gateways will be explored.

The *Indexing Images* course will cover description and subject analysis of photographs, film and video materials. No date has yet been set for the *Indexing Images* course.

Each course costs \$225.

Further information and bookings to Maureen Henninger, SILAS, UNSW, Sydney NSW 2052; phone (02) 9385 3589, fax (02) 9385 3430, email [m.henninger@unsw.edu.au](mailto:m.henninger@unsw.edu.au), URL: <http://www.silas.unsw.edu.au/silas/conted.htm>

## From the editor



The main content of the newsletter this month is the list of members with their contact details. There are also heaps of announcements—no space for the editor today! Have a good month.

**Glenda Browne.**

## Membership list

Total membership 179; Vic 51; NSW 47; ACT 38; Qld 20; SA 9; WA 3; NT 2; Tas 2; NZ 6; USA 1; 12 unlisted by request (26 May 1998). Please send corrections to: Membership Secretary, AusSI, PO Box R598, Royal Exchange, Sydney NSW 1225, or [gcousins@onaustralia.com.au](mailto:gcousins@onaustralia.com.au)

**Trevor Absalom**  
Absalom & Achitophel  
PO Box 89  
Elwood VIC 3184  
Work: (03) 9534 7396  
Home: (03) 9539 0025  
Fax: (03) 9593 9692  
Registered?: N

**John D. Adams**  
Unit 17, 115 Torbay Street  
Macleod VIC 3085  
Home: (03) 9435 0134  
Registered?: N

**Alexander Turnbull Library**  
PO Box 12-349  
Wellington NZ  
Fax: 64-4-474 3161  
Registered?: N

**James Anderson**  
2/55 Naples Road  
Mentone VIC 3194  
Work: (03) 9584 8980  
Home: (03) 9584 8980  
Fax: (03) 9584 9392  
[jandpubl@debtime.com.au](mailto:jandpubl@debtime.com.au)  
Registered?: Y

**Australian Government Publishing Service**  
GPO Box 84  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Registered?: N

**Anne Batt** ✓  
30 Colombo Street  
Victoria Park WA 6100  
Work: (08) 9346 2917  
Home: (08) 9364 6943  
Fax: (08) 9381 1553  
[abatt@library.uwa.edu.au](mailto:abatt@library.uwa.edu.au)  
Registered?: N

**Marlene Bell**  
PO Box 237  
Fullarton SA 5063  
Work: (08) 8272 1625  
Home: (08) 8272 1625  
Registered?: Y

**Barbara Bessant**  
22 Hinkler Cres  
Lane Cove NSW 2066  
Work: (02) 9418 8032  
Fax: (02) 9418 8032  
[bbessant@ozemail.com.au](mailto:bbessant@ozemail.com.au)  
Registered?: Y

**Brian Bingley**  
14 Gillian Close  
Noarlunga Downs SA 5168  
Work: (08) 8207 7279  
Home: (08) 8326 0667  
[bringley@hotmail.com](mailto:bringley@hotmail.com)  
Registered?: N

**Edyth Binkowski**  
GPO Box 1724  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Work: (02) 6249 2913  
Home: (02) 6281 2484  
Fax: (02) 6285 3186  
Registered?: Y

**Rohana Bourne**  
4 Bindiri Place  
Giralang ACT 2617  
Work: (02) 6241 1845  
Home: (02) 6241 1845  
Fax: (02) 6241 1845  
[natoff@ozemail.com.au](mailto:natoff@ozemail.com.au)  
Registered?: N

**Gabi Brie**  
PO Box 288  
Kempsey NSW 2440  
Work: (02) 6562 6656  
Home: (02) 6566 8319  
Fax: (02) 6562 8627  
[gabikeyn@midcoast.com.au](mailto:gabikeyn@midcoast.com.au)  
Registered?: N

**Laura Brinson**  
Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd  
Private Bag 55  
Camberwell VIC 3124  
Work: (03) 9277 5547  
Fax: (03) 9277 5500  
[brinson@acer.edu.au](mailto:brinson@acer.edu.au)  
Registered?: N

**Susan Brookes**  
71A Palmerston Road  
Birkenhead, Auckland NZ 1310  
Work: (09) 307 7240  
Home: (09) 418 3214  
Fax: (09) 307 7791  
Registered?: N

**Russell Brooks**  
19 Cowper Street  
Brighton VIC 3186  
Work: (03) 9596 1585  
Home: (03) 9596 1585  
Fax: (03) 9530 6253  
[rbrooks@netspace.net.au](mailto:rbrooks@netspace.net.au)  
Registered?: Y

**Glenda Browne**  
PO Box 307  
Blaxland NSW 2774  
Work: (02) 4739 8199  
Home: (0247) 39 8199  
Fax: (02) 4739 8189  
[Diagonal@bigpond.com](mailto:Diagonal@bigpond.com)  
Registered?: Y

**Lesley Bryant**  
79 Chelford Street  
Alderley QLD 4051  
Work: (07) 3352 6869  
Home: (07) 3352 6869  
Fax: (07) 3356 7171  
[gbryant@snp.com.au](mailto:gbryant@snp.com.au)  
Registered?: N

**Shirley Campbell**  
Unit 61, The Hermitage,  
Medley Street  
Chifley ACT 2606  
Work: (02) 6234 2225  
Home: (02) 6285 1006  
Fax: (02) 6234 2237  
[Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au](mailto:Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au)  
Registered?: N

**Simon J. Cauchi**  
13 Riverview Terrace  
Hamilton NZ  
Work: +64 7854 9229  
Home: +64 7854 9229  
Fax: +64 7854 9229  
[cauchi@wave.co.nz](mailto:cauchi@wave.co.nz)  
Registered?: Y

**Dora Chai**  
10/33 Anderson Road  
Hawthorn East VIC 3123  
Work: (03) 9890 3530  
Home: (03) 9822 3191  
Fax: (03) 9890 3150  
Registered?: Y

**Cecelia Clarke**  
10 St Giles Ave  
Greenwich NSW 2065  
Work: (02) 9436 1947  
Home: (02) 9436 1947  
Fax: (02) 9436 1947  
Registered?: Y

**Patricia Clarke**  
14 Chermiside Street  
Deakin ACT 2600  
Work: (02) 6281 2315  
Home: (02) 6281 2315  
Fax: (02) 6281 2172  
[mpcl@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mpcl@ozemail.com.au)  
Registered?: Y

**Graham L. Clayton**  
40 Kurrajong Crescent  
Blacktown NSW 2148  
Work: (02) 9857 1455  
Home: (02) 9621 6087  
Fax: (02) 9857 1600  
[gclayton@cch.com.au](mailto:gclayton@cch.com.au)  
Registered?: N

**Caroline Colton**  
1/70 Mount St  
Googee NSW 2034  
Work: (02) 9665 3553  
Home: (02) 9665 3553  
Fax: (02) 9665 3553  
[index@ozemail.com.au](mailto:index@ozemail.com.au)  
Registered?: Y

**William Coppell**  
22 Strezelecki Crescent  
Narrabundah ACT 2604  
Home: (02) 6295 8546  
Fax: (02) 6295 0899  
[coppell@dynamite.com.au](mailto:coppell@dynamite.com.au)  
Registered?: Y

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**Garry Cousins**

41 Gould Avenue  
Lewisham NSW 2049  
Work: (02) 9560 0102  
Home: (02) 9560 0102  
Fax: (02) 9560 0102  
gcousins@onaustralia.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Barbara Crighton**

29 Turner Avenue  
Baulkham Hills NSW 2153  
Work: (02) 9639 0796  
Home: (02) 9639 0796  
Registered?: N

**Linda Cross**

112-114 Thylungra Rd  
Munruben QLD 4125  
Work: (07) 3365 6628  
Home: (07) 3802 0678  
l.cross@mailbox.uq.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jean Dartnall**

17 Kepler St  
Wulguru QLD 4811  
Work: (07) 4778 1532  
Home: (07) 4778 2716  
Jean.Dartnall@jcu.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jenny Davies**

119 Felton Road  
Carlingford NSW 2118  
Home: (02) 9630 5170  
Registered?: N

**D.C. Davis**

29 Lansell Crescent  
Camberwell VIC 3124  
Home: (03) 9889 1618  
Registered?: Y

**Madeleine Davis**

PO Box 342  
Blackheath NSW 2785  
Work: (02) 4787 6277  
Home: (02) 4787 6277  
Fax: (02) 4787 6069  
redcliff@hermes.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Prue Deacon**

20/36 Shackleton Circuit  
Mawson ACT 2607  
Work: (02) 6289 5769  
Home: (02) 6286 1573  
Fax: (02) 6289 5799  
prue.deacon@health.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Barbara Dickens**

PO Box 4475  
Kingston ACT 2604  
Work: (02) 6295 3633  
Home: (02) 6295 3633  
Registered?: N

**Hazel Dittebrandt**

1/153 Mount Eliza Way  
Mount Eliza VIC 3930  
Home: (03) 9787 9060  
Registered?: Y

**Ivar Dorum**

40 Hawthorn Gve  
Hawthorn VIC 3122  
Home: (03) 9818 2546  
dorum@ozemail.com.au  
Registered?: N

**Lorraine Doyle**

15 Nirimba Ave  
North Epping NSW 2121  
Work: (02) 9936 6229  
Home: (02) 9876 4218  
Fax: (02) 9888 2229  
lorraine.doyle@lbc.com.au  
Registered?: N

**Bill Duncan**

248 Dryandra Street  
O'Connor ACT 2602  
Work: (02) 6275 0018  
Home: (02) 6247 4057  
Registered?: N

**Vera Dunn**

23 Pankhurst Crescent  
Gilmore ACT 2905  
Work: (02) 6262 1650  
Home: (02) 6292 2029  
Fax: (02) 6273 1180  
vdunn@nla.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Alan Eddy**

24 Normanby Terrace  
Mt Martha VIC 3934  
Home: (03) 5974 3445  
Registered?: Y

**Barbara Malpass Edwards**

PO Box 28  
Charnwood ACT 2615  
Work: (02) 6258 7571  
Home: (02) 6258 7571  
Fax: (02) 6258 7571  
BME@bigpond.com  
Registered?: N

**Lynn Farkas**

GPO Box 1870  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Work: (02) 6286 3529  
Home: (02) 6286 4818  
Fax: (02) 6286 6570  
jgllspie@pcug.org.au  
Registered?: N

**Margaret Findlay**

3A Goodall St  
Hawthorn VIC 3122  
Work: (03) 9277 5549  
Home: (03) 9818 1760  
Fax: (03) 9277 5500  
findlay@acer.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Berice J. Fisher**

4/15 Newington St  
Tarragindi QLD 4121  
Work: (07) 3892 6110  
Home: (07) 3892 6110  
berice@logicworld.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Marjorie Flood**

3 Coventry Crescent  
North Epping NSW 2121  
Work: (02) 9857 1445  
Home: (02) 9876 2871  
Registered?: N

**Julie A. Forrest**

7 Parkview Place  
Bridgeman Downs QLD 4035  
Work: (07) 3353 0120  
Home: (07) 3353 0120  
Fax: (07) 3353 0120  
j.forrest@mcauley.acu.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Eve Francis**

147 Honour Ave  
Chelmer QLD 4068  
Work: (07) 3406 7468  
Home: (07) 3379 5987  
Fax: (07) 3210 0172  
eve.francis@parliament.qld.gov.au  
Registered?: Y

**Roger Frey**

PO Box 1150  
Fremantle WA 6160  
Work: (08) 9336 4590  
Home: (08) 9336 4590  
Fax: (08) 9336 4590  
rf@context.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jill Gallop**

Brooker's Ltd  
PO Box 43  
Wellington NZ  
Work: (04) 499 8178, ext 819  
Home: (04) 475 8837  
Fax: (04) 499 8173  
jillg@brookers.co.nz  
Registered?: N

**Susan Geary**

10 Glenbrook St  
Everton Park QLD 4053  
Work: (07) 3855 7119  
Fax: (07) 3855 7268  
s.geary@mcauley.acu.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Jan George**

21 Elgata St  
The Gap QLD 4061  
Work: (07) 3864 3245  
Home: (07) 3300 6409  
Fax: (07) 3864 3994  
j.george@qut.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Ross Gilham**

Ginross Editorial Services  
RMB 1090 Aquarius Avenue  
Torquay VIC 3228  
Work: (03) 5261 5034  
Home: (03) 5261 5034  
Fax: (03) 5261 5034  
ginross@pipeline.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Karen Gillen**

4 Pearra Place  
Chapel Hill QLD 4069  
Home: (07) 3378 4071  
Registered?: N

**Joyce Gillespie**

Black Cameron  
Smith Gully VIC 3760  
Home: (03) 9654 8527  
Fax: (03) 9654 8527  
Registered?: N

**Karyn Gladwish**

Lionel Murphy Library,  
Attorney-General's Dept  
Barton ACT 2600  
Work: (02) 6250 6520  
Home: (02) 6291 6479  
Fax: (02) 6250 5947  
karyn.gladwish@ag.gov.au  
Registered?: N

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from page 45)

**Angela Grant**  
137 Shackleton Circuit  
Mawson ACT 2607  
Work: (02) 6260 9254  
Home: (02) 6286 2363  
Fax: (02) 6286 2104  
angelag@pcug.org.au  
Registered?: Y

**Joanne R. Grant**  
PO Box 58  
Tallangatta VIC 3700  
Work: (02) 6071 2274  
Home: (02) 6071 2274  
Fax: (02) 6071 2274  
fileworks@albury.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Kathleen Gray**  
'Old Oak', Franklings Road  
Harcourt North VIC 3453  
Work: (03) 5474 2556  
Home: (03) 5474 2556  
Fax: (03) 5474 2726  
kgray@bendigo.net.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jean Hagger**  
31 Maylands Avenue  
North Balwyn VIC 3104  
Home: (03) 9859 5963  
Registered?: Y

**Kathleen Harper**  
11 Clarence Street  
Brunswick East VIC 3057  
Work: (03) 9607 9342  
Home: (03) 9383 3684  
Fax: (03) 9607 9451  
kharper@liv.asn.au  
Registered?: Y

**Diane C. Harriman**  
10 Headland Road  
North Curl Curl NSW 2099  
Work: (02) 9905 8521  
Home: (02) 9905 8521  
Registered?: Y

**Michael Harrington**  
9 Dooring Street  
Braddon ACT 2612  
Home: (02) 6248 8297  
Registered?: N

**Meredith Healey**  
112 West St  
Crows Nest NSW 2065  
Home: (02) 9954 1545  
Fax: (02) 9954 1545  
Registered?: N

**Ling Heang**  
PO Box 728  
Applecross WA 6953  
Work: (089) 478 3343  
Home: 0418 941 861  
Fax: (089) 479 7509  
heangsl@bigfoot.com  
Registered?: N

**Kym Holden**  
68 Pridham St  
Farrer ACT 2607  
Home: (02) 6290 1435  
Fax: (02) 6290 1618  
rklholden@acslink.aone.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Patricia Holt**  
PO Box 172  
Clifton Hill VIC 3068  
Work: (03) 9905 5240  
Home: (03) 9852 7375  
Patricia.Holt@arts.monash.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**William Hood**  
School of Information, Library  
and Archive Studies  
University of NSW  
PO Box 1, Kensington  
NSW 2033  
Work: (02) 9358 3449  
Home: (02) 9476 6945  
W.Hood@unsw.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Tracy Hoogland**  
58 Drevermann Street  
Farrer ACT 2607  
Home: (06) 6290 2678  
hoogland@argay.com.au  
Registered?: N

**Barry Howarth**  
28 Aronson Crescent  
Gilmore ACT 2905  
Work: (02) 6249 4665  
Home: (02) 6292 4473  
barry.howarth@anu.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**Faith Howell**  
114 Sherwood Road  
Toowong QLD 4066  
Home: (07) 3371 5697  
Fax: (07) 3274 1158  
Registered?: N

**Olga Howell**  
130 Bandjalong Cr.  
Aranda ACT 2614  
Work: (02) 6251 3237  
Home: (02) 6251 3237  
Registered?: Y

**Robert Hyslop**  
33 Hampton Circuit  
Yarralumla ACT 2600  
Home: (02) 6281 1886  
rbthyslop@msn.com  
Registered?: Y

**Jennifer Ireland**  
3A Queens Place  
Balmain NSW 2041  
Work: (02) 9422 2320  
Home: (02) 9810 5730  
Fax: (02) 9422 2413  
jennireland@bigpond.com  
Registered?: Y

**Anne Irons**  
43 Fortuna Avenue  
North Balwyn VIC 3104  
Work: (03) 9859 3014  
Home: (03) 9859 3014  
Registered?: Y

**Jonathan Jermy**  
PO Box 307  
Blaxland NSW 2774  
Work: (02) 4739 8199  
Home: (02) 4739 8199  
Fax: (02) 4739 8189  
Diagonal@bigpond.com  
Registered?: Y

**Lyn Johnson**  
PO Box 1302  
Alice Springs NT 0871  
Work: (08) 8951 8114  
Home: (08) 8952 4248  
Fax: (08) 8951 8112  
lyn.johnson@nt.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Pamela Johnson**  
17 Radiata Avenue  
Baulkham Hills NSW 2153  
Home: (02) 9639 9435  
Fax: (02) 9639 9435  
Registered?: N

**Pamela Johnstone**  
PO Box 217  
Wentworth Falls NSW 2782  
Work: (02) 9963 8172  
Home: (02) 4757 3045  
Fax: (02) 4757 3045  
olc@pnc.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Clodagh Jones**  
238 Nelson Road  
Mount Nelson TAS 7007  
Work: (03) 6225 3848  
Home: (03) 6225 3848  
Fax: (03) 6225 3085  
jonec@netspace.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Anne Just**  
6 Clutha St  
Westlake QLD 4074  
Work: (07) 3403 0102  
Home: (07) 3376 8283  
Fax: (07) 3403 0101  
Registered?: N

**Carolyn Kearney**  
66/5-13 Hutchinson St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Work: (02) 9351 0325  
Home: (02) 9360 5793  
Fax: (02) 9351 0301  
c.kearney@library.usyd.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Hilary Kent**  
RMB 250  
Creekborough Road via  
Bungendor ACT 2621  
Work: (02) 6249 2615  
Home: (02) 6236 9317  
Fax: (02) 6236 9017  
JMerriitt@bigpond.com  
Registered?: Y

**Hai Choo Khoo**  
14 Sherman Place  
Bathurst NSW 2795  
Work: (02) 6338 4526  
Home: (02) 6332 4669  
hkhoo@csu.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**A.V. Large**  
28 Henslowes Road  
Ulverstone TAS 7315  
Home: (03) 6425 1639  
avlarge@southcom.com.au  
Registered?: N

**Liz Lee**  
4 Gray Street  
Norwood SA 5067  
Work: (08) 8363 2609  
Home: (08) 8363 2609  
Fax: (08) 8363 2609  
Registered?: N

(Continued on page 47)

(Continued from page 46)

**George Levick**  
1/51 Jackson St  
St Kilda VIC 3182  
Work: (03) 9534 4843  
Home: (03) 9534 4843  
Registered?: Y

**Robert Leydon**  
4 Thames St  
Surrey Hills VIC 3127  
Work: (03) 9210 1911  
Home: (03) 9836 4965  
Fax: (03) 9800 3369  
Registered?: N

**Brett Lockwood**  
8/141 Clarke St  
Northcote VIC 3070  
Work: (03) 9481 6747  
Home: (03) 9481 6747  
brett@melbpc.org.au  
Registered?: N

**Mary Long**  
3/190 Cotham Road  
Kew VIC 3101  
Work: (03) 9286 9125  
Home: (03) 9817 2360  
Fax: (03) 9286 9100  
m.long@bhatafe.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**P.R. Longley**  
Serials Librarian  
Periodicals Department  
La Trobe University Library  
Bundoora VIC 3083  
Work: (03) 9479 2911  
Fax: (03) 9479 5647  
p.longley@latrobe.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Shirley Mackay**  
9 Pearl Avenue  
Chatswood NSW 2067  
Registered?: N

**Tordis Mackey**  
28 Eatwell Avenue  
Paraparaumu Beach NZ  
Work: 64-4-298 7723  
Home: 64-4-298 7770  
camtor@ihug.co.nz  
Registered?: N

**Trevor Matthews**  
164 Windsor St.  
Paddington NSW 2021  
Work: (02) 9363 3341  
Home: (02) 9363 3341  
Fax: (02) 9363 9315  
tmatthews@mail.usyd.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**May McCool**  
16 Richardson Street  
Douglas, Townsville  
QLD 4814  
Home: (07) 4775 6654  
Registered?: N

**Anna Beth McCormack**  
218 Cowper Street  
Goulburn NSW 2580  
Home: (02) 4821 8131  
Fax: (02) 4821 8131  
mccormack@goulburn.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Margaret McGeehan**  
9 Alroy Circuit  
Hawker ACT 2614  
Work: (02) 6205 0390  
Home: (02) 6254 6738  
Fax: (02) 6205 0392  
margaret\_mcgeehan@dpa.act.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Josephine McGovern**  
3/30 Foote Street  
Brighton VIC 3186  
Home: (03) 9596 1555  
Registered?: Y

**Michael McMahon**  
5 Porter Street  
Hampton VIC 3188  
Work: 0419 550 526  
Home: (03) 9598 9315  
Fax: (03) 9521 9237  
mikmak@mira.net  
Registered?: N

**Max McMaster**  
44 Rothesay Avenue  
East Malvern VIC 3145  
Work: (03) 9571 6341  
Home: (03) 9571 6341  
mindexer@interconnect.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Kirsty McRobert**  
11 Eltham Street  
Flemington VIC 3031  
Work: (03) 9669 9047  
Home: (03) 9376 6782  
kirstiem@newvenus.slv.vic.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Joan Merrell**  
17 Brookman St  
Torrens ACT 2607  
Home: (02) 6286 3282  
Fax: (02) 6286 6325  
jmerrell@canberra.teknet.net.au  
Registered?: N

**J.R. Merrick**  
PO Box 490  
Artarmon NSW 2064  
Work: (02) 850 7974  
Home: (02) 630 3129  
Fax: (02) 9850 7972  
Registered?: N

**Mark Micallef**  
PO Box 525  
Kings Cross NSW 2011  
Work: (02) 9368 0670  
Home: (02) 9368 0670  
Registered?: N

**R.W. Mills**  
Unit 2, 57 Gloucester Ave  
Berwick VIC 3806  
Home: (03) 9707 1363  
Registered?: N

**Ann Parry**  
4 Godfrey Road  
Artarmon NSW 2064  
Work: (02) 9419 3868  
Home: (02) 9419 3868  
Registered?: N

**Helen Penridge**  
PO Box 6069 Mooloolah  
QLD 4553  
Work: (07) 5494 7311  
Home: (07) 5494 7311  
Fax: (07) 5494 7890  
chiron@acslink.net.au  
Registered?: Y

**Janet Perlman**  
610 East Bell Road  
Phoenix, AZ USA 85022  
Work: (602) 569 7302  
Home: (602) 569 7302  
jperlman@aol.com  
Registered?: N

**Nasim Perumal**  
58 Bimberi Cres  
Palmerston ACT 2913  
Home: (02) 6242 9289  
nasim.perumal@alianet.alia.org.au  
Registered?: N

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(Continued from page 47)

**Ann Peut**

98 Limestone Ave  
Ainslie ACT 2602  
Work: (02) 6240 8901  
Home: (02) 6247 5242  
Registered?: N

**Ann Philpott**

PO Box 232  
Surrey Hills North VIC 3127  
Work: (03) 9830 0494  
Home: (03) 9830 0494  
Fax: (03) 9830 0494  
Registered?: Y

**William Phippard**

PO Box 234  
Henley Beach SA 5022  
Work: (08) 8235 1535  
Home: (08) 8235 1535  
Registered?: Y

**Ann C. Prestney**

332 Catherine Field Road  
Catherine Field NSW 2171  
Home: (02) 9606 5810  
Registered?: N

**Margery E. Price**

10 Maleela Avenue  
Balwyn VIC 3103  
Home: (03) 9817 4417  
Fax: (03) 9817 4417  
Registered?: Y

**Raymond Price**

PO Box 555  
Brighton SA 5048  
Work: (08) 8392 8390  
Home: (08) 8272 0004  
Fax: (08) 8392 8400  
rprice@sola.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jennifer Pritchard**

111 Riversdale Road  
Hawthorn VIC 3122  
Home: (03) 9818 2089  
Registered?: N

**Michael Ramsden**

104 Lakeview Drive  
Lilydale VIC 3140  
Home: (03) 9735 4235  
Fax: (03) 9739 6285  
mramsdn@ozemail.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Hilary Ranger**

3/98 Grosvenor St  
St Kilda VIC 3183  
Work: (03) 9527 7243  
Home: (03) 9527 7243  
Fax: (03) 9527 7243  
hranger@werple.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Pam Ray**

67 Hopetoun Circuit  
Yarralumla ACT 2600  
Home: (02) 6281 3931  
Registered?: N

**Louise Raynes**

18 Isobel Rd  
Greenhithe, Auckland NZ  
Work: (64 9) 488 2760  
Home: (64 9) 413 9356  
Fax: (64 9) 483 2463  
Registered?: N

**Jenny Restarick**

208 Kooyong Road  
North Caulfield VIC 3161  
Work: (03) 9545 2178  
Home: (03) 9528 2539  
Fax: (03) 9528 2539  
j.restarick@ffp.csiro.au  
Registered?: Y

**Suzanne Ridley**

81 Creekborough Road  
Bungendore NSW 2621  
Work: (02) 6236 9251  
Home: (02) 6236 9251  
Fax: (02) 6236 9042  
Registered?: N

**Elizabeth Riley**

3 Tangmere Street  
Chapel Hill QLD 4069  
Home: (07) 3378 0576  
e.riley@qut.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Susan Rintoul**

Professional Editing Services  
PO Box 234  
Henley Beach SA 5022  
Work: (08) 8235 1535  
Home: (08) 8353 3410  
seaview@adl.auslink.net  
Registered?: Y

**Christine Roberts**

2/80 Cremorne Rd  
Cremorne Point NSW 2090  
Work: (02) 9697 7636  
Home: (02) 9953 3605  
Fax: (02) 9953 7645  
x0000495@acsusun.acsu.  
unsw.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Miranda Roccisano**

PO Box 203  
Welland SA 5007  
Work: (08) 8352 8448  
Home: (08) 8352 1262  
Fax: (08) 8352 8448  
mrocisan@camtech.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Jeanne Rudd**

102 Bridge Road  
Glebe NSW 2037  
Work: (02) 9716 6099  
Home: (02) 9660 6029  
Registered?: N

**Jo Rudd**

1/18 New Street West  
Balgowlah NSW 2093  
Work: (02) 9400 6715  
Home: (02) 9400 6715  
Registered?: Y

**Nathalie G. Schulz**

21 Kiama Street  
Wavell Heights QLD 4012  
Work: (07) 3875 5242  
Home: (07) 3359 7084  
Fax: (07) 3875 5314  
N.Schulz@ins.gu.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Mary Anne Secker**

PO Box 133  
Biloela QLD 4715  
Work: (07) 4992 9520  
Home: (07) 4995 8334  
Fax: (07) 4995 8323  
red.index@tpgi.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Margaret H. Shand**

52 Rio Vista Boulevard,  
Florida Gardens  
Broadbeach Waters QLD 4218  
Work: (07) 5532 4922  
Home: (07) 5538 1423  
Registered?: Y

**Kingsley Siebel**

11/22 Frederick Street  
Hornsby NSW 2077  
Work: (02) 9477 3149  
Home: (02) 9477 3149  
Registered?: Y

**John E. Simkin**

148 Stawell Street  
Richmond VIC 3121  
Work: (03) 9429 8817  
Home: (03) 9429 8817  
simmo@enternet.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Lyn Stead**

56 Martins Road  
Barnadown VIC 3557  
Work: (03) 5432 2256  
Home: (03) 5432 2256  
Fax: (03) 5432 2447  
stead@bendigo.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Alice Stephens**

23 Lukin Street  
Clayfield QLD 4011  
Work: 015 722471  
Home: (07) 3268 3293  
Registered?: N

**Bettina Stevenson**

5/6 Mackie Court  
Kew VIC 3101  
Work: (03) 9853 1649  
Home: (03) 9853 1649  
Registered?: Y

**Patricia Stone**

2 Gillespie Street  
Weetangera NSW 2614  
Home: (02) 6254 5525  
Registered?: N

**Steve Sunter**

14 Coolabah Drive  
Eltham VIC 3095  
Work: (03) 9637 2638  
Home: (03) 9439 3734  
Fax: (03) 9282 2600  
steve@az.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Geraldine Suter**

41 Lothian Street  
North Melbourne VIC 3051  
Work: (03) 9328 2230  
Registered?: Y

**Sharon Szeto**

5 Crowther Avenue  
Greenwich NSW 2065  
Home: (02) 9438 5604  
Registered?: N

**Carol Taylor**

100 Stradbroke Rd  
Montrose VIC 3765  
Work: (03) 9761 9699  
Home: (03) 9761 9699  
Fax: (03) 9761 8949  
Registered?: Y

**Alicia Thompson**

2/43A Spofforth Street  
Mosman NSW 2088  
Work: (02) 9925 0711  
Home: (02) 9909 3346  
Registered?: N

(Continued on page 49)



(Continued from page 48)

**Marita Thompson**  
PO Box 8438  
Alice Springs NT 0871  
Work: (08) 8950 0133  
Home: (08) 8952 2548  
m.thompson@cazr.dwe.csiro.au  
Registered?: N

**Neil Towart**  
84 Hat Hill Road  
Blackheath NSW 2785  
Work: (02) 9264 1691  
Home: (02) 4787 6637  
n.towart@labor.org.au  
Registered?: Y

**Geraldine Triffitt**  
PO Box 537  
Mawson ACT 2607  
Home: (02) 6231 4975  
gtriffitt@hotmail.com  
Registered?: N

**Angus Trumble**  
Assoc. Curator of European Art  
Art Gallery of South Australia  
North Terrace  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Work: (08) 8207 7014  
Home: (08) 8232 8376  
Fax: (08) 8207 7072  
ang@camtech.net.au  
Registered?: Y

**Laurelle Tunks**  
11 Phillips Place  
Latham ACT 2615  
Work: (02) 6234 1139  
Home: (02) 6254 3875  
Registered?: N

**Jean Turvey**  
16 Dobell Crt  
Mt Pleasant QLD 4740  
Work: (07) 4942 6266  
Home: (07) 4942 6266  
Registered?: N

**Gail Umehara**  
45 Highfield Avenue  
St Georges SA 5064  
Home: (08) 8379 8748  
Fax: (08) 8379 5685  
umehara@camtech.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Alan Walker**  
10 Rockwall Crescent  
Potts Point NSW 2011  
Work: (02) 9368 0174  
Home: (02) 9368 0174  
Fax: (02) 9358 5593  
alan.walker@s054.aone.net.au  
Registered?: Y

**Dwight Walker**  
3/132 Centenary Road  
South Wentworthville  
NSW 2145  
Work: 0412 405 727  
Home: (02) 9896 0286  
dwight@zip.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Deirdre Ward**  
47 Wakeford Rd  
Strathfield NSW 2135  
Home: (02) 9642 7929  
Registered?: Y

**Robin L. Ward**  
81 Shackleton Circuit  
Mawson ACT 2607  
Work: (02) 6249 4451  
Home: (02) 6286 2956  
Fax: (02) 6279 8010  
robin.ward@anu.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**Jill Waterhouse**  
26 Creswell St  
Campbell ACT 2612  
Work: (02) 6207 2182  
Home: (02) 6257 4607  
Fax: (02) 6207 2177  
Jill\_Waterhouse@dpa.act.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Patricia Waters**  
20 Karoo Ave  
East Lindfield NSW 2070  
Work: (02) 9438 2399  
Home: (02) 9416 7664  
Fax: (02) 9436 3014  
parents@ozemail.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Judy Webster**  
PO Box 2044  
Salisbury East QLD 4107  
judyweb@st.net.au  
Registered?: N

**Christabel Wescombe**  
Fisher Library  
University of Sydney NSW 2006  
Work: (02) 9351 3506  
Home: (02) 9437 6760  
Fax: (02) 9351 7290  
c.wescombe@library.usyd.edu.au  
Registered?: N

**Gary Weston**  
PO Box 232  
Churchill VIC 3842  
Work: (03) 5122 6874  
Home: (03) 5122 1004  
Fax: (03) 5122 6744  
gary.weston@lib.monash.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**E. Whitten**  
24 Somerville Street  
Spence ACT 2615  
Work: (02) 6258 2055  
Home: (02) 6258 2055  
Registered?: N

**Penelope Whitten**  
49 Williams St  
Watson ACT 2602  
Work: (02) 6274 7411  
Home: (02) 6241 4289  
Fax: (02) 6274 6695  
pwhitten@email.dot.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Alan Wilson**  
47 Archibald St  
Lyneham ACT 2602  
Work: (02) 6277 2570  
Home: (02) 6247 5774  
Fax: (02) 6277 2622  
Alan.Wilson@aph.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Janet Wilson**  
34 Araba St  
Aranda ACT 2614  
Work: (02) 6277 2626  
Home: (02) 6251 7611  
Fax: (02) 6277 2532  
Janet.Wilson@aph.gov.au  
Registered?: N

**Robert Withycombe**  
52 Birdwood St  
Hughes ACT 2605  
Work: (02) 6281 2170  
Home: (02) 6281 2170  
Fax: (02) 6273 4067  
Registered?: N

**Gek S. Wong**  
PO Box 163  
Ormond VIC 3204  
Work: (03) 9239 5199  
Fax: (03) 9562 4939  
Registered?: N

**Elizabeth Wood-Ellem**  
28 View St  
Alphington VIC 3078  
Work: (03) 9499 6883  
Home: (03) 9499 6883  
Fax: (03) 4999 6883  
eowe@rubens.its.unimelb.edu.au  
Registered?: Y

**Michael Wyatt**  
Keyword Editorial Services  
22 Kendall Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Work: 0500 539 973  
Home: (02) 9332 1414  
Fax: (02) 9331 7785  
keyword@ozemail.com.au  
Registered?: Y

**Amy Young**  
3 Rae Street  
Hawthorn VIC 3122  
Home: (03) 9818 5329  
Registered?: N

**Michele Ziegler**  
35 Jannali Crescent  
Jannali NSW 2226  
Work: (02) 9350 6248  
Home: (02) 9528 2031  
Registered?: N

## Newsletter and Webmaster contacts

**Editor:** Glenda Browne

**Immediate past editor:** Dwight Walker

**Webmaster:** Jonathan Jermy

email: [aussi@zeta.org.au](mailto:aussi@zeta.org.au),

<http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi>

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Glenda Browne

PO Box 307

Blaxland NSW 2774

ph: (02) 47 398 199; fax: (02) 47 398 189

email: [Diagonal@bigpond.com](mailto:Diagonal@bigpond.com)

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### The Indexer (International indexing journal)

Janet Shuter, Hon. Editor

[Shuter@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:Shuter@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Corresponding Editor Aust/NZ: Dwight Walker

02-98960286, (02) 9777 2058 (fax),

0412 405 727 (mobile),

[dwight@zip.com.au](mailto:dwight@zip.com.au)

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## National Executive

PO Box R598, Royal Exchange NSW 1225,

ph: (02) 9560 0102,

email: [gcousins@onaustralia.com.au](mailto:gcousins@onaustralia.com.au)

**President:** Alan Walker ph (02) 9368 0174,

fax (02) 9358 5593, email: [alan.walker@s054.aone.net.au](mailto:alan.walker@s054.aone.net.au)

**Vice President and Membership Secretary:**

Garry Cousins (02) 95600102,

email: [gcousins@onaustralia.com.au](mailto:gcousins@onaustralia.com.au)

**Secretary:** Lorraine Doyle (02) 9936 6229 (w)

(02) 9876 4218 (h), fax (02) 9888 2229

email: [Lorraine.Doyle@lbc.com.au](mailto:Lorraine.Doyle@lbc.com.au)

**Treasurer:** Tricia Waters (02) 9416 7664 (h),

(02) 9438 2399 (w) (Tue-Thu)

**Committee Member:** Carolyn Kearney

### NSW branch

PO Box R598, Royal Exchange NSW 1225

**President:** Michael Wyatt (02) 9331 7764 (w),

fax (02) 9331 7785, email: [keyword@ozemail.com.au](mailto:keyword@ozemail.com.au)

**Secretary:** Madeleine Davis (02) 9438 5354 (w),

fax (02) 9436 0026, email: [mdavis@matra.com.au](mailto:mdavis@matra.com.au)

**Treasurer:** Pamela Johnstone phone/fax

(02) 4757 3045, email: [pnj@pnc.com.au](mailto:pnj@pnc.com.au)

**Committee Member:** G. Browne

### Victorian branch

GPO Box 1251, Melbourne Vic 3001

**President:** Margaret Findlay, ph. (03) 9277 5555,

email: [findlay@acer.edu.au](mailto:findlay@acer.edu.au)

**Vice President:** Max McMaster ph/fax (03) 9571 6341,

email: [mindexer@interconnect.com.au](mailto:mindexer@interconnect.com.au)

**Secretary:** Jenny Restarick ph/fax (03) 9528 2539 (h),

email: [Jenny.Restarick@enquiries.csiro.au](mailto:Jenny.Restarick@enquiries.csiro.au)

**Treasurer:** Joyce Gillespie (03) 9654 8527 or

ph/fax (03) 9710 1270

**Committee Members:** G. Levick, E. Wood-Ellem,

J. McGovern, M. Ramsden

### ACT region branch

GPO Box 2069, Canberra ACT 2601

**President:** Lynn Farkas, ph (02) 6286 3529, fax (02) 6286 6570

**Immediate Past President:** Geraldine Triffitt

ph (02) 6246 1177; fax (02) 6249 7310,

email: [grtriffitt@hotmail.com](mailto:grtriffitt@hotmail.com)

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Shirley Campbell

ph (02) 6234 2225; fax (02) 6234 2237,

email: [Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au](mailto:Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au)

**Committee Members:** R. Hyslop, S. MacDougall, L. Tunks,

H. Kent, P. Whitten, B. Edwards, P. Deacon

### Qld group with Soc. Ed. (Qld)

**Contact:** Julie Forrest (07) 3353 0120 (h)

email: [J.Forrest@mcauley.acu.edu.au](mailto:J.Forrest@mcauley.acu.edu.au)

### SA group with Soc. Ed. (SA)

**Contact:** Susan Rintoul (08) 8235 1535 (h), fax (08) 8235 9144

email: [seaview@seaviewpress.com.au](mailto:seaview@seaviewpress.com.au)