Software Review:
Cindex for Windows 1.0 and Sky Index 5.1 (Professional edition)

Michael Wyatt reviews and compares the recently released versions of the two principal Windows-based computer software packages designed to assist professional indexers in compiling back-of-book-style indexes.

He considers the "look and feel" of each and compares the relative ease of data entry and editing, the sorting capabilities, index management features, cross-reference and authority structure, formatting capabilities, methods for producing printed and machine-readable output, and online and printed documentation. He also lists the prices, makes recommendations for purchase based on users' needs, and provides a table comparing the features of each.

Introduction

History of the packages

Cindex (from Indexing Research in the USA) has been around in DOS form for many years, as one of two major software packages for professional indexers (along with Macrex). The latest DOS version is 6.1, released in 1997. A Macintosh version was also released in 1997. Cindex for Windows Version 1 has been completely rewritten for Windows, and runs under Windows 95 or later. As you would expect, it retains nearly all the features of the latest DOS version and includes further features. In general, it works in the same way as the DOS version, with the changes you would expect in any transfer to the Windows environment.

Sky Index (from Sky Software, also in the USA) began life as a DOS program designed specifically for genealogists, and was released as a Windows product in 1995. It was simple to use and inexpensive, and an ideal tool for those who had to compile simple indexes from time to time, but who were not professional indexers. It simplified data entry, particularly for name indexes, and exported a raw index file to a word-processor for final editing. "Sky Index Version 5.1" is available in two "editions": Standard Edition and Professional Edition. The Standard Edition is an improved version of the earlier genealogists' tool, with additional data entry and formatting features that allow more editing to be done from within Sky Index before export to a word-processor. The Professional Edition has many extra features for the professional indexer. I review the Professional Edition here, but much of what I say also applies to the Standard Edition.

The new features

If you haven't used the earlier versions of these products, skip to the next section.

Cindex now has Windows menus, displays indexes in WYSIWYG format, and makes full use of the mouse. You no longer have to remember a multitude of abstruse commands or the dreaded "arguments". However, for power users most menu items have alternative keyboard shortcuts. The "add/edit" screen has been transformed into an independent panel, and is more intuitive. The various commands have been regrouped and renamed to match other Windows software. The dialogue boxes function very much as before, with some additional details. They no longer take up the whole screen, and because of the mouse are much quicker to use. A list of differences between the versions is provided for those upgrading.

Earlier versions of Sky Index had a distinctly quirky and homespun feel. Version 5.1 has been redesigned and resembles a Microsoft Access screen, though some of the icons still have a rather whimsical appearance. You can now view the index formatted and sorted from within the program. Icons have been redrawn and menus reorganised to match other Windows software more

Noticeboard

NSW Branch Seminar: The Electronic Haystack

The Electronic Haystack, a seminar conducted by the NSW Branch, was held at Penrith Library on Saturday 29th August, and attracted about 20 attendees. Speakers in the first session were Marius Coomans, founder and director of Firmware Design, a company distributing and supporting authoring software for CD-ROM and Internet-based information packages and Maureen Henninger from the Continuing Education section of the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies at UNSW. They were followed by Lynn Farkas of the ACT branch, who is organising discussion groups to obtain material for a publication which will be used to promote the Society.

The first speakers were introduced by Jonathan Jermey, AusSI Webmaster, who described the rate at which publication is moving to electronic forms, and pointed out that indexing costs will be a much larger proportion of the costs of electronic production than they are in traditional print-based media.

Marius Coomans described his initial involvement with CD-ROM production and his move on to the Web. He suggested that the Internet was an ideal way to reach niche markets which could be scattered world-wide, rather than focussing on the Australian market, which was too small to be viable. He added that distributors needed to be sensitive to cultural issues and stressed the importance of involving locals in evaluating and modifying the material.

Maureen Henninger spoke about the need for 'traditional' indexers to broaden their skills in order to deal with the Internet and related media. There are many different groups involved in producing data and making it available, each with their own standards and their own terminology. Indexers must learn the jargon and the standards, and be prepared to market their services as 'classification consultants' or 'thesaurus constructors' to people who have little idea of what a traditional 'index' is or does.

The tea break was followed by Lynn Farkas, who spoke about her project and the kind of responses already obtained from focus groups in the ACT and Melbourne. The aim was to obtain some agreement on the skills and characteristics of indexers in order to produce a promotional brochure. The seminar then split into focus groups and brainstormed for an hour before reporting back on their conclusions.

Some of the suggestions arising from the session were:

- Indexing needs a new name; 'Semantic analysis' and 'Multiple meaning disambiguation' were among those suggested.
- We need usability testing to provide some hard evidence of the importance of a good index.
- Indexers have an important role in training: not only for other indexers, but also for users of information and producers of information.
- Legal indexers require special skills and have their own terminology.
- Indexers can create indexes at different levels for online books, can structure and index websites and can index online and other catalogues.

Thanks are due for organising the meeting to the NSW branch and particularly Madeleine Davis. **J.J.**

August Indexer conference

Clodagh Jones is the Tasmanian contact for the 1999 AusSI conference. Her email address is jonec@netspace.net.au. Please correct this in your August newsletter where it was wrongly printed.

To the literature

Any articles on indexing will be warmly welcomed by the editors of *The Indexer* (details on last page). Topics of current interest include Indexing Beyond the Millenium (the future of indexing), interesting or unusual projects that exemplify professional practice, technology, and opinion (especially discussion furthering the professionalism debate).

UNSW Indexing courses

The next *Indexing Web Documents* course will run on September 24th. Cost is $225. Further information and bookings to Maureen Henninger, ph (02) 9385 3589, fax (02) 9385 3430, email m.henninger@unsw.edu.au, web: http://www.silas.unsw.edu.au/silas/conted.htm

ASI conference: Racing into the Millenium!

The American Society of Indexers (ASI) 31st Annual Conference will be held from June 9 to 13, 1999, in downtown Indianapolis. Proposals for presentations should be sent by November 2nd 1998 to Sandi Schroeder at Sanindex@xsite.net or Lori Lathrop at 76620.456@compuserve.com.

▮ Noticeboard

Letter on the proposal for an International Organisation of Societies of Indexers (IOSI).

I give broad support to Alan Walker's suggestion (AusSI Newsletter July 98) for an international body.

Indexing is an activity which has no national boundaries. It has universal characteristics and identical objects. Modern technology and means of communication have together brought people and nations closer. By co-operation, our horizons can still be broadened.

There is a growing awareness of what international effort can, and has achieved since WW II. This is particularly true where people of many nations have commonality of interests. Indexers are professionals with such a bond. We have an International Standard (which Australia has adopted).

SI has stood for nearly half a century. Its association with other national Societies has created a solid foundation. Alan's plea is for a further step in an ongoing direction – internationalisation.

I have a few reservations. We all do, when something new is confronted. Our natural inclination is to cling to what we have successfully done in the past. However, progress requires initiative and sound planning, to convince people to venture forward. The societies together at Tynemouth (1998) may be able to produce a blue-print – or will it be finalised in Tasmania (1999) ?

Any plan must aim to prevent disruption of the current organisation(s), at all costs. It must convince individual members of the respective Societies, in a positive way, of the necessity for and viability of, an international body to be at the apex.

An international bureau must provide leadership and continuity; it must have the full suppport of each of the national societies. If it becomes a reality, I suggest the Bureau be moved around. Seven years in the first location – in England probably – to have time to set roots and policy; and then rotate for five-year terms.

Kingsley Siebel.

Indexers Medal 1998

The Australian Society of Indexers is again offering its annual Medal for the most outstanding index to a book or periodical compiled in Australia or New Zealand.

The Medal will be presented to the indexer responsible for the best index submitted, if it is of sufficient quality, and the publisher of the winning index will be presented with a certificate. The presentations will take place at a Society dinner to be held in late November.

To be eligible for the award, the index must be in print and must have been first published after 1995. It must have been compiled in Australia or New Zealand even though the text to which it refers may have originated elsewhere.

For the award, indexes are judged at the level of outstanding professional achievement, thus sufficient material is required, both in quality and quantity, for appraisal. The index should be substantial in size, the subject matter should be complex, and the language, form and structure of the index should demonstrate the indexer's expertise, as well as serving the needs of the text and the reader.

Publishers, indexers and all interested persons are invited to nominate indexes which meet the above criteria, and which they regard as worthy of consideration. Indexers are encouraged to nominate their own works.

Please send recommendations, with bibliographic details, and if possible together with a copy of the book/periodical (which will be returned), to:

Secretary, Australian Society of Indexers,
PO Box 1251, Melbourne Vic 3001 Australia
as soon as possible, and no later than
Friday, 9 October, 1998.

For further information, please contact Max McMaster, ph/fax: +61 3 9571 6341, email: mindexer@interconnect.com.au

From the editor

This issue is largely filled by Michael Wyatt's review of Cindex and SkyIndex. For those of you without specialised indexing software in particular this will be one of the most important articles you could read. The review will be continued next month.

To make more space in the newsletter I have deleted half of the contacts on the back page as they can be found in past newsletters and on the AusSI website. I have also used a lot of 10-point font. Let me know if either of these space-saving devices worry you.

Happy Indexing, **Glenda Browne.**

closely. For most jobs, you can now format the index totally within Sky Index, without any need to export it to a word-processor. The Professional Edition has a raft of new features that make this a program for professional indexers. Almost all earlier features have been retained, though most have been streamlined and some, like setting data entry and index format options, now operate many times faster than before.

Presentation

The appearance of the screen is probably the biggest difference between these two programs.

CINDEX has a slick and extremely professional finish. It really does look as if it has been written by a large and experienced software house. All its icons and dialogue boxes have the familiar Microsoft feel, and I immediately felt comfortable with its feel and confident in its high design standards.

CINDEX is written for Windows 95 and will not run on earlier versions. It takes full advantage of the 32-bit functionality — every process appears to be carried out instantaneously, even on my slow old Pentium 133. SKY Index is written for Windows 3.1x, although it operates perfectly in Windows 95. You can't choose long file names or different default working directories. Some of its processing operations run more slowly, and in a large index it feels as though you often have to wait. Remember, though, that most time spent in indexing is in thinking or keying, so the time spent on computer processing is insignificant. **See below.**

Both let you view the index in a variety of formats. In CINDEX, you can choose between "unformatted" and "draft" views (both of which show record numbers as well as formatting and sorting codes) and "formatted" view, which displays the index exactly as it will print out — but more on formatting later. All views can be displayed in "sorted" or "unsorted" (that is, record number) order, at any number of subheading levels. In addition, you can restrict which records appear in your view (and can therefore limit any processing to them) by a number of parameters, such as those added in the current session, those modified in the current session, those marked for deletion, or those records that you have marked for some process. To display the index in page number order you set parameters in the "Sort" dialogue box; I find this irritatingly fiddly, since to change the display back to alphabetical order you must return to the "Sort" dialogue box and reset it.

The SKY Index screen is split into two basic resizeable sections. At the top is the "Preview pane", where entries are displayed *approximately* as they will print. The final typeface and size and the line length are not displayed; more importantly, subheads are always displayed in set-out format, even if they are set to print run-on. Below this is the "Entry grid", where you carry out all entry and editing operations, and formatting and sorting codes are displayed. The Preview pane is always displayed in sorted order; the Entry grid can be displayed in sorted order, page number order, order of entry, and a couple of other views, all with a single mouse click. **See next page.**
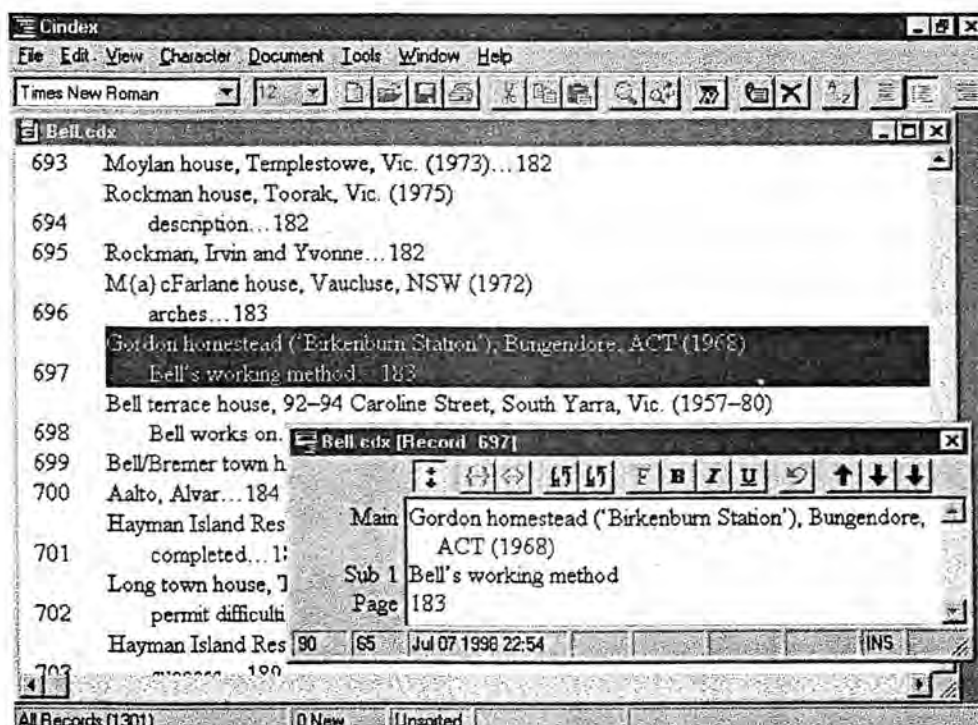
Data entry

Apart from the screen appearance, the data entry metaphor is the major distinguishing feature of the two products.

CINDEX continues its metaphor from the DOS version of the index card: you fill in one "card" and CINDEX files it

Figure 1.
Cindex for Windows

automatically for you, according to your pre-set instructions. The Windows interaction is a huge improvement on the DOS version: in the background is the index, in one of a variety of formats and sort orders, while overlaid on this is the index "card" which can be quickly and easily resized and moved anywhere on screen. When you "file" the card, the entry files immediately in its correct place and format, and the card is blanked, ready for a new entry.

The SKY Index metaphor is that of a database or spreadsheet table, with rows, columns and cells. Each row on the grid is an index entry; each column is a level of heading, subheading, or page reference. Each cell can be manipulated independently, and its contents moved or copied to any other cell in a variety of ways.

In both programs, new records are added to the end of the sequence. You can repeat the page reference automatically from the previous record or copy it manually with a keystroke; copy various fields from the previous record; duplicate records; and swap fields.

Both have keyboard shortcuts for commonly used terms, allowing you to type a few letters which are expanded automatically; CINDEX calls these "abbreviations" and SKY Index "acronyms". Although they are easy to use in both programs, in SKY Index they are very easy to set up, simply a mouse click; but in CINDEX setting up is comparatively complicated and initially confusing — you need to open a separate file of abbreviations with a rather unhelpful user interface.

What sets SKY Index apart in data entry is its "Auto entry" facility. As you type, SKY Index second-guesses what you are about to type, based on earlier entries and the number of times you have typed them. You can

import entries from other indexes and save them for use in other indexes, a great time-saver when indexing periodicals or multi-part publications. Depending on the sort of text you are indexing, and your typing skills (mine are abysmal), you can save an enormous amount of keying time.

When entering data you often want to copy text from another location in the index. In SKY Index you can drag text from any cell to any other cell visible in the same display, and easily cut-and-paste between those that are not. However, you cannot drag text into the index from outside, from another index or a text document that you are indexing. In CINDEX, you can drag text from outside the index, either another index or a text document, but you cannot drag it between entries within the same index.

For compiling an ordinary index, both products are pretty evenly matched. If the index contains much repetition, SKY Index is superior because of its auto-entry facility, the ease of setting up acronyms, and the ability to drag-and-drop within the index. I prefer the flexibility of the grid structure over the confines of the "index card" approach, but this is purely personal — others may feel more comfortable with the familiar card metaphor.
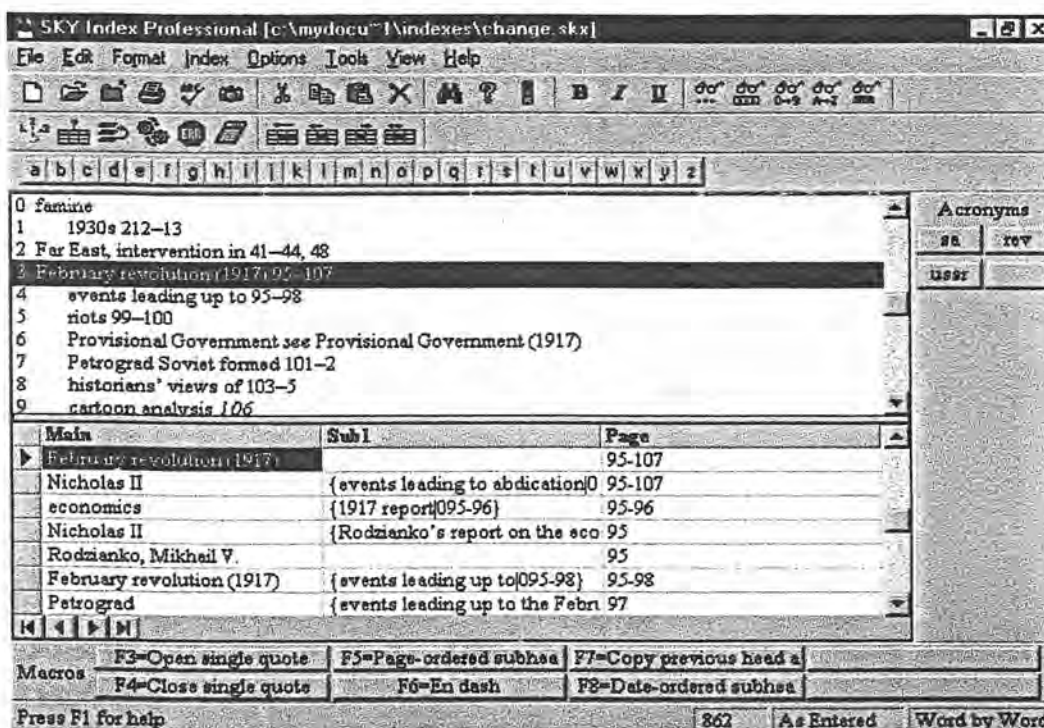
Special characters

Both programs let you enter accented letters and symbols from any Windows font you have loaded. CINDEX uses its own management system, while SKY Index invokes the character map that comes with Windows.

Number of subheadings

CINDEX allows up to 16 levels of heading, subheading and page reference; SKY Index allows five. In practice, both of

Figure 1. Sky Index

these are more than most indexers will ever use. SKY Index does not permit more than one level of subheading in run-on format, which I have found a severe limitation for some indexes.

Page references

As mentioned, in both programs page references can be set to copy automatically from the previous record, and both programs can perform calculations on page numbers. In SKY Index, pressing the plus key (whichever cell the cursor is in) increments the page number by one. SKY Index also corrects batches of page references that have been incorrectly entered. If the client adds or deletes pages, both programs let you increment or decrement a range of page references by any specified amount.

Sometimes it is easy to end up with messy location references, especially if you have been flipping records or merging indexes, so that you can end up with a string like "129, 129–136, 130, 131–132, 136". In formatted view, Cindex automatically displays these correctly, as "129–136". Although SKY Index does not correct such errors automatically, when you scan for errors it picks up such strings and displays them as improperly formed entries.

Both programs let you begin indexing at any part of a book using provisional page numbers (provided the page breaks remain constant), and assign real page numbers at the end. In CINDEX the replacement process is difficult to set up; you use the pattern matching capability of the "replace" function, which took me some time to master. In SKY Index it is a straightforward matter of choosing options in a simple dialogue box.

Both programs accommodate volume numbers in a variety of formats.

Record size

Record size in CINDEX must be set. The factory default is 100 characters, but it is very easy to change this, either as your default, or for each index. However, it is extremely irritating when you run out of space when you are entering a record, and you have to interrupt your train of thought to exit data entry mode and reset the record size. In SKY Index the limit is 255 characters per field, which cannot be changed; I have never needed to exceed this.

Number of indexes open

In CINDEX, you can have as many indexes open as your computer's memory will permit, and can move easily between them. This is essential if you are preparing several indexes to a single publication (such as an author index and a subject index). You can size and position each within the CINDEX window, or choose between cascading and tiling them. Records are easily copied and pasted or dragged between indexes, though copying parts of a record is too difficult to be feasible in most instances.

In SKY Index you can have only one index open at a time. You can, however, open as many instances of SKY Index as you choose, sizing, positioning and tiling or cascading them using standard Windows commands, and you can copy and paste records, text and cells between the indexes (though you can't drag them). I personally dislike this approach: screen real estate is taken up by duplicated title bar, menu bar and other bars such as those containing icons, macros, abbreviations and status (though these can be turned off). In practice, however, the two approaches both work.

Editing

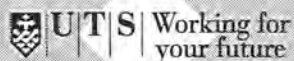For both programs, editing is virtually a variation of adding records.

Proofing

Both programs let you sort records in order of entry or page number and print them out for proofing.

Navigating

Both programs assign a unique record number to each index record. The record number is a boon if you're correcting the initial proof in entry order, if your printed draft is in an order different from that on the screen, or if the entries to be corrected are any distance from each other.

In CINDEX, the numbers are displayed in draft and "unformatted" view (but not in "formatted" view), and the display can be switched on or off with a mouse click. You call up a record for editing by typing the record number or the first few letters of the heading, or you invoke a "Go to" dialogue box in which you enter the opening letters of the main heading and any level of subheading. A highlighting bar snaps to the record, and you press the Enter key or double-click the highlighting bar to open the "index card" with the entry ready for editing.

Getting to records in SKY Index is marginally more cumbersome than in CINDEX, in that you must call up a "Go to" dialogue box (which operates exactly like CINDEX's). The record numbers don't appear on screen, so when I am correcting my initial proofs in entry order, I occasionally get lost. But once your cursor is at the correct record, you have the same superior flexibility as for data entry.

If your mouse has a scrolling wheel or scrolling buttons, this facility works perfectly in CINDEX. In SKY Index you have to move the mouse cursor to the scroll bar before it will work, which rather defeats the purpose.

Find and replace

The find and replace function in both programs works in the same manner, in much the same way as a word-processor. Each program provides a variety of filters. At first, CINDEX's system of filters seems rather daunting, but is packed with features: it is possible to find any combination of text and attributes and replace them with any other. SKY Index's find-and-replace feature is barely adequate — you can't, for example, find all volume numbers in page references and change them to bold — though it does display how text will look after a replacement *before* it replaces it, unlike CINDEX.

Both programs let you group and display found records in a variety of orders. CINDEX lets you store the group for future reference; in SKY Index you can store search filter parameters.

Duplicating records

Duplicating single records and blocks of records for double-posting is very easy in both programs. Duplicating and/or "flipping" the elements of a record is just a matter of a keystroke or two; both can adjust capitalisation automatically. When you "flip" a record in SKY Index that contains a subdivision that begins or ends with a preposition, the preposition is automatically relocated correctly (e.g. if you flip "education: in Queensland" you get "Queensland: education in").

To duplicate a block of entries, you highlight it with the mouse and select "duplicate" from the menu.

Splitting and joining

In both programs, it is easy to split existing headings into headings with subheadings, and to join subheadings to headings. It is possible to carry out this operation on several records simultaneously, though in both systems it is a two-step process. Both systems let you join all solo subheadings to their headings in a single global operation.

Conclusion

Records are easier to target in CINDEX. However, the need to carry out editing within the "index card" box can be very restrictive. Copying text can be so tiresome that it's often easier to retype it. For me, the flexibility of SKY Index's ability to move text easily between cells outweighs CINDEX's ease of locating records.

Sorting

Both programs let you sort word-by-word or letter-by-letter, or in ASCII sort order. It is easy to choose the order and to change it at any time. They let you choose whether to sort numbers or ignore them.

Both programs allow you to force the sorting order of particular entries or terms, by inserting codes that identify text as printed but not sorted, or sorted but not printed.

Both programs ship with a list of prepositions that are ignored in sorting when they appear as the first word of a subheading. The list can be amended or deleted for all new indexes or for the current index only.

CINDEX lets you sort subheadings at any level in page number order, without affecting the order of other levels.

Index management

Setting defaults

Both programs ship with certain preset defaults, which apply to all new indexes. It is possible to change these defaults. In CINDEX, you close or minimize all indexes, and then change the settings. In SKY Index, you create a new index named "default" (or if you have already created one, you open it), and change the settings.

Templates

Both programs allow you to import the format of other indexes. SKY Index imports data entry options such as acronyms and macros, and output formatting options. CINDEX lets you set up and save as separate files both templates and style sheets that can be used by other indexes. I must confess to initially being baffled by CINDEX's distinction between templates and style sheets; it seems that one contains the other.

Importing and exporting indexes

If you are working in collaboration with other indexers, you will probably need to exchange index files. You can import records prepared in other software products, such as text editors or database programs, as text delimited files or in a variety of formats. In addition, CINDEX can import backup files made by Macrex; and SKY Index can import backup files made by CINDEX and Macrex.

(Continued from page 77)

From Sky Index you can export text delimited files containing sort override and text formatting code for use by both CINDEX and Macrex, though this is not described in the documentation.

Checking spelling

CINDEX comes with an English spelling dictionary. You can buy dictionaries for other languages, or dictionaries of specialist terms such as legal and medical terminology. You can also create your own supplementary dictionary.

Sky Index exports your index in text delimited form to your word-processor for checking, and reloads it after checking. The advantage of this is you only need to maintain one set of spelling dictionaries on your computer for all your work, instead of one for word-processing and another for indexing.

Backing up

Backing up indexes is easy in both programs. CINDEX allows you choose to back up as an exact copy or as a compact "archive" file. Alternatively, both programs let you save the data alone as a delimited text file.

Error trapping

Both programs can check your index for errors, on the fly or as a batch process.

Statistics generation

Both programs provide statistical information on your index, such as number of records, size of records, number of page references, the number of lines in the formatted index, and the cumulated time the index has been open.

Merging indexes

Merging indexes is easy. In CINDEX, you simply open both indexes, choose "Select all" for one and drag its entries into the other. In Sky Index, you open the receiving index, choose "Merge index" and then the name of the index to be merged.

In CINDEX, you can also merge *parts* of an index with another index, simply by dragging selected or grouped records into another index.

Multi-volume works, works in parts, and periodicals

Both programs help you prepare indexes to multi-volume works, works that are issued in parts, periodicals, loose-leaf services and other material that is issued over a period.

Both programs keep track of volume and chapter numbers, let you manipulate them independently of page numbers, allow you to display the index entries for a single volume or chapter on the screen, and provide a variety of options for displaying volume and chapter numbers in the final index. In Sky Index you can import auto-entry data from other indexes.

Macros

Macros let you combine a long or complex series of operations into a single operation. Recording a macro in CINDEX is easy. You choose "Record events" and perform the keystrokes and/or mouse movements you want recorded. To invoke the macro at any time, you choose "Play events". Unfortunately, you can store only one macro at a time.

Sky Index allows you to store up to 20 macros, invoked by pressing one of the function keys on the keyboard. Setting them is up more complicated though, and you must use a simple programming language. For very complex operations this can mean careful planning and debugging.

Syndetic structure

Cross-references

The programs treat cross-references in a very similar manner — in my view, rather inadequately. You type cross-references in the subheading or page-reference field, preceded by "see" or "see also", and the program recognises them as cross-references and formats them appropriately. Both programs let you specify the terms you intend to use for cross-references, so that you can use foreign-language equivalents. Getting non-standard

terminology (like "see also earlier form of name") to format correctly is a bit of a struggle. Both provide checking mechanisms to pick up blind or circular references; SKY Index can check that a cross-reference is valid as soon as you enter it. Both can handle cross-references containing terms that are not identical to the heading; for example, they can accept "ABC *see* Australian Broadcasting Corporation" as a valid cross-reference to "Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)"; you can if you wish set CINDEX to recognise only exact matches.

Authority control

Authority control leaves a lot to be desired in both programs. CINDEX can display a list of terms without page references, listing under each term any "see" or "see also" cross-references that point to it.. But this list must be generated each time you want to consult it, and although you can print it out you can't save it as a separate file to use as an authority list for future indexes. SKY Index can be set to notify you whenever you enter a term not already in the "auto entry" list.

In both programs it is *possible* to create authority lists which you can print out and save as a separate file; it is *possible* to embed in an entry authority information on cross-references made to it; it is *possible* to load an authority list you have created as the basis for a new index and then delete unused headings. But none of these are documented anywhere; it is difficult to work out how to perform them, and very time-consuming to carry them out.

Formatting

Formatting your final index is the third area where the greatest differences between the programs are visible.

In SKY Index, you can choose between set-out format for all levels of subheading, and run-on for a single level of subheading. You can choose among several formats for page-range sequences, the punctuation of page references, and the format of cross-references.

The formatting options in CINDEX appear almost infinite. The range of options and their combinations is so vast that choosing the correct combination of settings can take some time, but it's difficult to think of a format that can't be achieved somehow.

In brief, SKY Index provides formatting for most indexes produced by most indexers. CINDEX provides any format that I can imagine anyone ever needing.

For example, I have indexed a number of political and critical biographies. For these, an appropriate format for the entries for major characters is set-out subheadings arranged in alphabetical order with subsubheadings run-on in chronological order (often the same as page-number order). It is possible to achieve this format in CINDEX after a little

experimentation, and very handsome it looks too. In SKY Index, it is impossible.

CINDEX displays your index in exactly the typeface, type size, column-width etc. that it will print out. You may find this useful — I don't.

To be continued next week...

If you are really impatient to see how it ends, check the AusSI website at: http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi.

From the Webmaster

The Web site was revamped last month, with three major changes:

- I've added a consistent footer to each page, with the page filename and some copyright and contact details. Suggestions for other information to appear on each page are welcome.

- Character and paragraph formats are now based on a style sheet, which allows for site-wide changes to character fonts, colours, indents, spacing, etc, through changes to only one file. So far the only use I have made of this is to convert headings to Arial Bold font, giving them a little more prominence on systems which have that font. Other users should see no change.

- I have changed the animated icon on the home page and added a modified Home button to all the other pages.

What I would like to do soon is to add some Dublin Core metadata to all the pages. At the moment there is a little of this on some pages contributed by others (e.g. conference papers) but no consistent use throughout the site. FrontPage allows me to add metadata tags individually to each page, but I am looking for (free!) software that will allow me to do it to many pages at once. If I can't find any then I might have to write my own.

Branches and members are invited to submit their news and reports to aussi@zeta.org.au for inclusion on the Web.

Jonathan Jermey, Webmaster

Welcome Websites

The third edition of the Macquarie Dictionary is online at http://www.macnet.mq.edu.au.

The Australian Design Cafe site has good info on website design. Find it at: http://www.designcafe.com.au/article/art8/.

From the literature

Two recent issues of the *NFAIS newsletter* (Vol 40 (4) and Vol 40 (5)) have included reports from the NFAIS 40th Anniversary conference.

In the Author's Roundtable on the New Paradigm (vol 40(4), p. 53), Dr Teresa Harrison discussed 'dialogic communication' such as scholarly discussions on listservs (for example, Index-L). She said: 'However, it has occurred to me that if somebody were willing to index it, if someone were willing to abstract it [i.e. listserv discussions]...some really interesting and valuable things could happen with it'.

Those of you who have subscribed to Index-L for a while will know that some topics come up for discussion regularly. There is often no shortage of people willing to answer the same questions over and over again, however it would be more efficient if people could go first to the discussion which has already happened, and then ask additional questions if necessary.

For example, every 6 months people ask about the USDA indexing course If the listserv archives were indexed, they could search for 'USDA' and look at all the posts there. For most people this would be all the information they need; if not they could then ask more specific questions on Index-L. But the archives are not easy to search, so people ask the question again.

The alternative to indexing is for this information to be abstracted, and published on a website. In theory the list of frequently asked questions (FAQ list) is meant to do this: in practice the FAQ list contains ready reference type information about software, medal winners, books to read and so on, rather than meaty discussions on working issues. The ASI website has a very good section on practical indexing issues which in some way is a summary of many points discussed on Index-L.

And, to be practical, this is probably all we can expect. As with many questions to do with web indexing, the will and the expertise are there, but the money to *pay* for it is sadly lacking. **G.B.**

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