



Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter

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Indexing AustLII's Community Legal Information

Pages. *This report comes from a speech given by Madeleine Davis at the Annual Maria Gemenis Award Dinner, NSW Special Libraries Group, 28 July 1999. Madeleine Davis is an indexer at AustLII.*

Introduction

Thank you for asking me to speak tonight. I am a back-of-book and legal loose-leaf indexer who has 'morphed' into a legal Internet surfer and classifier, without really noticing the transition - the intellectual tools I use as an indexer have not changed - only the medium.

My presentation is about working as a legal indexer on the Australasian Legal Information Institute website and in particular on the community legal information pages on the site. Legal and community advice services have historically been provided either in printed form, or by face-to-face contact, both of which impose limitations such as availability and timeliness in the case of the former and geographic location and in, particular, cost, in terms of the latter. The Web now offers a unique opportunity to expand the provision of this information and advice overcoming many of the above limitations.

AustLII's public policy agenda is to maximise the availability of free legal information via the Web. It does this in two ways:

- Through its databases of primary legal materials. AustLII hosts 80 full text databases of Australian legislation and case law; and
- Through its World Law Index. This is a catalogue or directory of thousands of selected Australian and overseas law sites and the area in which I am engaged. The community legal information pages are another interface to the World Law Index and Australian Law Index material on AustLII - the directories of links that encompass the ever-expanding legal material on the Web.

AustLII's achievement has been to provide an accessible interface with this latter material for the user, by providing a comprehensive description of the

site content on the home page and by integrating its research tools - providing the ability to browse the information (via a hierarchical index) by source or 'author', or by subject, combined with AustLII's own sophisticated search mechanism.

It appears that the general community makes extensive use of both primary and secondary material on the site. This is borne out by the 200,000 'hits' the AustLII site receives each day. In June 1999, the community legal information pages alone received over 2200 'hits'. Requests for legal information and help with legal problems via AustLII's feedback facility and general emails are increasing and attest to the need for such community information to be freely available and easy to find ie to help non-legally qualified Internet users find plain English legal information on the Web.

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Noticeboard

ACT Branch activities

On Saturday 14 August the ACT Region Branch will run a half day (9am to 1pm) Abstracting Workshop.

NSW Society of Editors

Meets monthly (usually first Tuesday of the month) at Judicial Commission Conference Centre, 5th floor Wynyard House (just above Wynyard Station) at 6.30 for 7.00. Cost \$15 including drinks and light eats.

7 Sept: Mark Macleod of Hodder Headline on trends in educational publishing.

International news

Christine Jacobs is organising a column of international news for *The Indexer* to replace the old *Shoobox* column. If you have news of any special indexing activities (not only AusSI ones) or special projects please let me know.

What's inside

Due to popular request AusSI branch activities are now listed in the 'What's inside' box on the front page, as well as in the 'Dates for your diary' section on this page.

Executive phone numbers

This issue has the latest details for the ACT executive and the WA contact.

August Indexer conference

Less than a month to the AusSI conference.

NSW Branch activities

CINDEX for Windows (and Macintosh)/SKY Index Workshop

The NSW Branch is holding a combined workshop on Cindex for Windows and Sky Index on Saturday 21 August from 9.00am to 1.00pm. Francis Lennie from Indexing Research (US) will be presenting the former and Michael Wyatt, Vice President of AusSI will present the latter. Thomson Legal and Regulatory Group (formerly LBC Information Services) have kindly offered the use of their training room and computers so the workshop will be a real hands on session. The numbers are limited to ten participants so expressions of interest should be notified as soon as possible to Lorraine Doyle by phone at 02 8587 7229 or by email at Lorraine.Doyle@lbc.com.au.

The workshop costs \$75.00 for members and \$90.00 for non members and will be held at: Training Room Thomson Legal Regulatory Group, 100 Harris Street Ultimo. There is ample (and cheap) parking available at the Crown Casino Carpark which is less than 5 minutes walk from the Thomson Building.

Ask an Indexer seminar

The NSW Branch is holding a workshop on Saturday 25 September from 9.30am to 1.00pm with panels of experienced indexers to answer any questions you may have relating to the skills of being an indexer. The aim is to provide an open forum for discussion, a 'nuts and bolts' session for people to further their expertise in either technical or intellectual areas. Topics will include indexing of books, periodicals and legal texts as well as web indexing, new indexing software and the business aspects of the profession.

Interested participants are welcome and encouraged to fax, phone in or email any specific issues or questions which they would like the panels to address.

Expressions of interest should be notified to Madeleine Davis by phone at 02 9514 3176, by fax at 02 4787 6069 or by email at redcliff@hermes.net.au.

The workshop costs \$30 for members and \$45 for non-members and will be held in the Board Room, New South Wales Writers' Centre. The Centre is located in the grounds of Rozelle Hospital. Enter the hospital from Balmain Road opposite Cecily Street and follow the signs to the Centre). Parking is available in the grounds.

Dates for your diary	
Soc. Editors (NSW) meeting	1st Tues in month
Abstracting workshop (ACT)	14 Aug
CINDEX and SKYIndex (NSW)	21 Aug
AusSI conference in Tasmania	27-29 Aug
Ask an indexer (NSW)	25 Sept
ASI conference	10-13 May, 2000



Noticeboard

Australian Literature Database

"The Australian Literature Database: A Collection of 18th, 19th and early 20th century texts" is available at the University of Sydney SETIS web site: <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/ozlit>.

The collection consists of nearly 90 full text Australian literary, historical and political works, each of which has been SGML-encoded according to the Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange (TEI2). The texts are fully searchable for keywords and phrases, and can be browsed easily by author's names. Each text is filtered to HTML on-the-fly for viewing on the client's web browser. The site has also incorporated elements of the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and EBIND dtd's, for the encoding of finding aids to archival collections and for the management of digital images.

We wish to extend the coverage of our collection and are seeking digital files of Australian texts such as novels, short stories, poems, explorers' journals and so forth. These will be encoded according to the TEI guidelines and due acknowledgement made of contributors. These files will be retained as part of the collection, which has the potential to act as a national repository for literary, historical and political texts for this period.

We are pursuing funding for the project, and believe that it will receive greater support as its potential value becomes more widely known. The project has received support from a number of institutions such as the Australian Cooperative Digitisation Project 1840-45 (ACDP), The Scholarly Editions Centre (ADFA), Macquarie Dictionary Ozcorp database, the State Library of New South Wales and the University of Western Australia Library. A number of academic staff from several universities have supported and provided advice on the collection.

Please send me any files, or comments or suggestions you may have for further development of the project. If you would like to know more about the project or perhaps make a contribution to the work I would welcome your enquiries.

(email from Dr Creagh Cole: SETIS Coordinator, University of Sydney Library, University of Sydney 2006 Australia. Phone: (61)(2) 9351-7408 Fax: (61)(2) 9351-7290, email: creagh@library.usyd.edu.au)

Domestic Workers' Compensation

When all the indexes you have been expecting in the last month arrive on the same day, do you quickly call in a cleaner to keep domestic duties under control?

Did you know that if you pay people to work around your home (eg cleaning and gardening) in NSW you are liable if they injure themselves.

Domestic workers' compensation insurance is available as an add-on to some Home Contents insurance policies for about \$20 a year. GB

John Gibson, Obituary

John Gibson, a long-term member of the Society of Indexers, GB, has died aged 90. He was a medical doctor, and author of 25 textbooks (and one crime novel, which was rejected). From writing he moved into specialist indexing using cards in a shoebox.

He was a Vice-President of SI, and a winner of the Wheatley medal. He "enjoyed the challenge of a multi-author, multi-nationality biochemical or biogenetical tome; a book that would never be read from cover to cover; a book only affordable by specific libraries, where a coherent and unifying index was far more important than the constituent parts".

(Obituary by RO Gibson, Sidelights, Spring 1999.)

From the editor

The main article in this issue is an abbreviated version of Madeleine Davis's talk given at the AustLII conference. Madeleine has had the opportunity to use traditional indexing skills in a full-time job in a totally new environment.

I was interested in the concept, discussed in the obituary of John Gibson, above, of the index to a book that would never be read cover to cover being more important than the constituent parts. I guess it is in these huge tomes that the grouping feature of an index becomes so important.

The next newsletter will come out two weeks early, as I will be holidaying in Tasmania after the conference.

Glenda Browne



(AustLII, Cont. from page 61)

2 The community legal information pages

2.1 Information navigation (or, 'There is nothing new under the sun')

The issue of accessibility on the AustLII site is most important. Pages are deliberately minimalist, designed to be legible, short, to download quickly and be viewed on a variety of user platforms. In addition, the necessity for scrolling down pages has also been kept to a minimum. While many web users now know that pages scroll and that important links are viewed lower down the page, many of the community users may still not be aware. AustLII's indexes offer two columns of category information wherever possible to alleviate the need for scrolling down.

User trust is important to AustLII. Web sites are frequently added to and restructured. There may be outdated content or lost links and it is a sure way to lose credibility particularly for new or inexperienced users when this occurs. The links are only valuable to the user if they are maintained. AustLII's links pages are checked overnight and the site is updated fortnightly.

Part of providing serious access to information, however, is providing subject access. In the case of

text materials access is very commonly by subject - category headings, indexes, descriptors, classification systems etc - there is a long history of subject access but this type of approach is not routinely provided in web site design.

I was looking for a hook or subheading for this paper - and I found one - Lou Rosenfeld heavy Net nerd! - wrote an article in Web Review in July 1999 entitled "So What are Site Indexes and Why are they so Sexy?". It would appear that the use of indexes is slowly penetrating the fog of web content and indexing techniques are being re-discovered as a navigation method. In fact, Mr Rosenberg doesn't really like to call them indexes at all but refers to them as supplemental navigation systems. Just like librarians are now being referred to as knowledge managers and knowledge consultants, new terms are being coined to describe our occupations. No matter. Hallelujah I say! The indexing profession is being reborn!

AustLII has borrowed extensively from indexing methods. This is AustLII's value adding - based on subject indexing, cross-referencing of material, adding multiple entry points into the information and formal structuring of the categories of information.

2.2 Organising and structuring the information

The printed index is well understood and has been for centuries. It is fundamental to any research activity.

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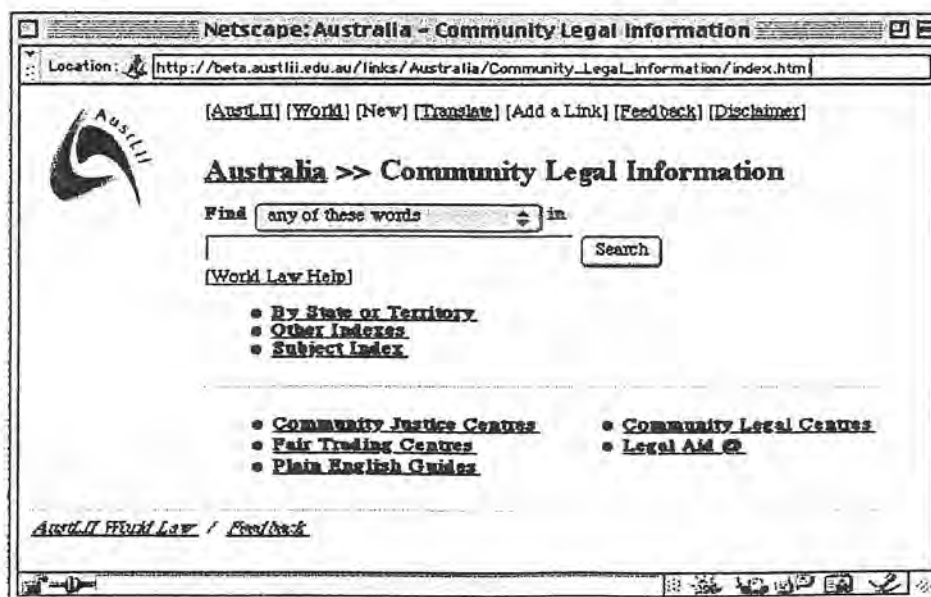


Figure 1. Type of material provided on the AustLII community legal information pages

(AustLII, Cont. from page 64)

The Web has taken indexing into an entirely different realm. Indexers were once able to index with a general understanding of the audience and the material. Now they must understand a user's expectations and how an audience interacts more deeply with information on the Web.

Distributing information via a web site is still relatively new and navigation of the information in this new format is still in its infancy. However, the same indexing standards still apply: consistency, clarity, and organization. The user must know what to expect by a logical progression through the information; the user must understand the term or concept; and the entries need to be properly organised, not just in alphabetical order but with multiple entry points into the information. The indexer must still anticipate how the user will dive into the information.

Adapting indexing techniques to the Web has entailed adjusting and modifying the normal indexing rules. AustLII uses a highly structured hierarchical system that emphasises context. On AustLII's community legal information pages, each menu screen presents the user with choices and then leads to specified topics. Only one level of indexing will appear on each screen as compared with the flatter structures of back-of-book indexes where up to three or four levels of information are laid out.

Cross-references or double posting of information is concealed. On the new AustLII interface *see also* references to related areas of information will be expressly indicated on screen.

Although the number of levels of information are limited as much as possible, users may need to go through several layers to reach the contents or directory pages. This decision is traded off against the user's ability to target exactly the information they want. User frustration with 'drilling down' through a number of levels before getting to information is offset by the specificity of the information that can finally be retrieved. And, navigation support is continuous, ie there is a clear indication of what part of the site any one page belongs to and it is linked back to the main page for that section so users can track where they have been in the hierarchy.

The user can click through several levels by expanding a term in the index categories. In the actual directories or contents pages there are annotations of the links to allow the user to pick the most relevant link under a particular topic. The addition of annotations to the actual directories of links assists users to judge whether the link is relevant for their needs. This information might take the form of a précis of the contents of a site, outline the type and extent of the information on a site, or, if the link is pointing to a general site or a government or agency site, then the link indicates it is to the home page.

(Continued on page 66)

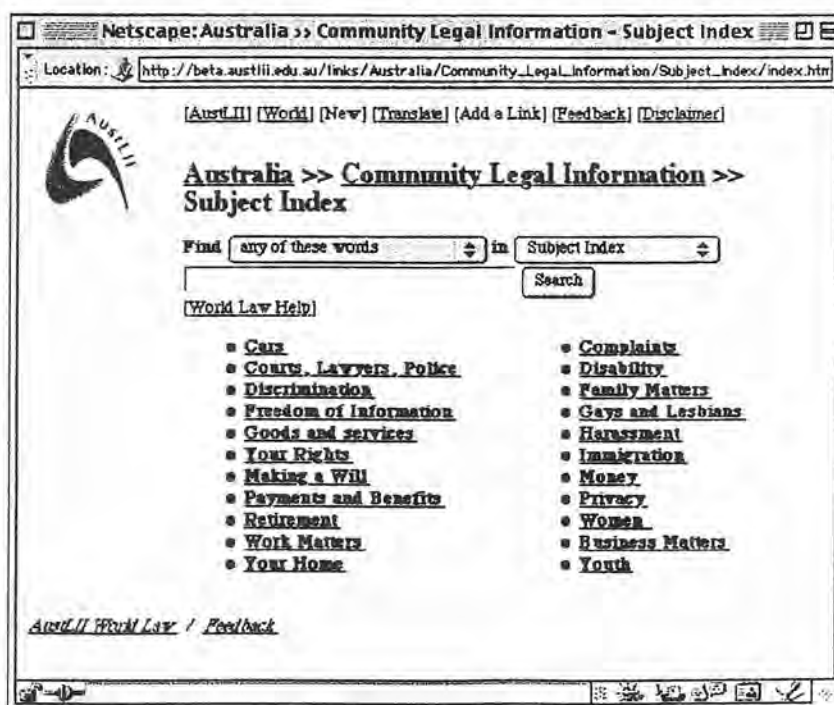


Figure 2. Access to information by subject.

(AustLII, Cont. from page 65)

The advantage of this type of index is its flexibility – the category entries can be expanded so that subject areas can be kept up to date and relevant; the directories or contents pages have no limit to the number of entries.

The challenge for AustLII in particular on the community legal information pages is to select the right subset of subjects or categories to include on the screen.

3. Type of material provided on the AustLII community legal information pages

Figure 1 shows the type of material provided on the AustLII community legal information pages.

The category links in the community legal information pages are to sub-sections of subject categories, other pages within the AustLII site as a whole (ie general legal topics within the Australian Law Index or specified databases) and to external sites on the Web. Within the latter, the link may be to the home page of a general site or to specific subject matter in the

contents of a site.

Material on the community legal pages can be discovered or accessed through a variety of paths;

Figure 2 shows an example of access to information by subject.

Clearly one of the biggest challenges for the community legal information pages is to choose the right words to reflect the subject matter. The law is itself a specialised language. Without the recording and storing of that language the law as we know it would never have developed. Legal indexes are an intrinsic part of the system of law. Such indexes are used by experienced lawyers and clerks, auxiliary legal personnel, librarians, caseworkers and law researchers. Novices also use them and the indexer must anticipate what people with no expertise either in the legal area or in using the Web, want to find. In relation to the community legal information pages, AustLII has instigated a change in vocabulary use – less formal legal language, more plain English and inclusive language. Subject categories for the community legal pages are selected from The Law Handbook, terms used in referral calls to community legal centres and based on the language used in plain

(Continued on page 67)

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(AustLII, Cont. from page 66)

English legal information - both printed and on other web sites.

The community legal information pages are also indexed:

- by source or type eg community legal centres, fair trading centres, legal aid centres, plain English guides;
- by jurisdiction;

Users also have:

- access to direct information on AustLII databases eg Legal Information Access Centre's Hot Topics on AustLII's Subject Specific and Other Databases page;
- access to direct information on other sites on the Web. Frequently these sites contain information across a wide spectrum of community needs hence the links point to selected areas of these sites;
- access to other resources - This is the Other Indexes category and lists relevant directories, guides and other catalogues of links on the Web where material is usually only listed in alphabetical order;
- home pages of agencies and organisations - community legal centres, legal aid centres, government departments and agencies;
- access to the Australian Law Index with further subject listings
- access to primary legal materials - AustLII's databases of legislation and cases; and
- access to multilingual legal material - this is currently being investigated.

But AustLII cannot develop the subject categories until there is something to put behind them. Unlike book and periodical indexing or even indexing the content of web sites, the AustLII process is twofold:

- first find the information (FindLaw actually advertises for legal surfers to bring legal material back from the Web!)
- then classify it and add it to the community legal information content pages

4. Availability of information on the Web (or, The making of books is without limit)

There is now a huge eagerness to publish on the Web. In particular, there has been a massive increase

in publicly available community legal information - a result of the push for plain English/plain language material and the logical progression to mounting this information on the Web eg see such sites as LIAC, Law Foundation of NSW, Law ForYou, Lawstuff, several of the court sites and federal and state government departments eg the Department of Fair Trading of NSW.

This explosion has given way to a new problem - finding and keeping up to date with these new resources. Given the technical sophistication of the Web, the discovery of new sites is surprisingly unsophisticated and must be undertaken as a combination of several methods:

- AustLII is a member of working groups concerned with community access to legal materials, best practice guidelines for Australian legal web sites, and multilingual information under the aegis of LISC (Legal Information Standards Council) sponsored by Foundation Law;
- AustLII participates in Internet lists and discussion groups eg legalinfo-online (an initiative of LISC); INT-LAW - the international law librarians list (the most proactive legal group on the Web and a mine of information about new sites);
- AustLII maintains liaison with LIAC (Legal Information Access Centre) and in particular has commenced a pilot project to mount some of its plain English information online, resulting in two of LIAC's Hot Topics bulletins being made available on the AustLII site;
- AustLII is on a number of mailing lists including the E Bulletin from PIAC (Public Interest Advocacy Centre) and Law Spot - a notification mailout of what's new on the Law For You site;
- Targeted surfing of Australian legal sites and following the related or other links pages on these sites;
- Law firm sites eg Gadens Lawyers publications on line;
- Search engines on the Web - although a recent analysis of the effectiveness of these engines shows the limitations and bias involved in such searches;
- Other legal directory sites on the Web eg Australian Law on the Internet Subject Guides (National Library), the Foundation Law Practice Collections, the Law Internet Guide (University of Sydney);

(Continued on page 68)

(AustLII, Cont. from page 67)

- 'Add a link' to AustLII - other sites may submit links to be added to the directories after checking and approval. These sites can choose the AustLII subject or source category most relevant for their site and request a link to their own site; and
- 'Feedback' at AustLII - following up advice from users regarding useful sites to add or simply requests to find information. How to adopt a child? Is there a general power of attorney form that can be downloaded from the Web?

Once found, there are two basic criteria for choosing to link to sites:

- Technical - some web sites make it difficult technically to link to anything other than their home page. It is then not appropriate to index it under any specific subject heading or enable the information on the site to be retrieved by AustLII for search purposes; and
- Intellectual - users are directed to quality sites and sources that contain related information. An annotation that briefly indicates the authorship, content or relevance of these sites enhances the usefulness of these links although AustLII does not indulge in star ratings - only links that have been assessed for their relevance are listed to increase the likelihood of people finding the information they are looking for.

The flip side of seeking out new resources on the Web is also getting found! This is the other side of my indexing duties. When a site is indexed by key legal gateways or other major legal sites, its visibility and accessibility increases. AustLII is currently concentrating on this aspect and proactively seeking listing across the Web. AustLII has designed its site to be amenable to bookmarking as an important aspect of public accessibility.

The best sites on the Web are those which offer integration of navigation methods - ie a combination of site map or content list, a search engine and an intellectual index - to ensure that the user has the best possible access to the information. This is what AustLII has developed and is expanding using the combined capacities of its technical and indexing personnel.



Practical Points

Marking up.

Do you always mark up (that is, highlight) the text before you index? In discussions on Index-L a number of indexers said that they do not mark up text, but type entries directly.

Many of the respondents who did not mark up indexed technical works such as computer manuals, where there is not a lot of probing for concepts, and where the text is clearly separated into small sections. In very recent discussions, however, indexers of more scholarly books also described methods for indexing without marking up.

Some of these indexers do mark the ends of page ranges for sections of the book. That is, if a section of text runs from page 60 to page 64, they will write '64' at the section heading. One of them enters as she reads, and puts a tick at each word she has indexed (or at the word that best describes the concept) for a permanent record on the text.

I have only once indexed a book without marking up. It was a cookery book, and most of the indexing came from recipe titles, or quick glances at the recipes themselves. This made the indexing quicker.

On the other hand, I did mark up a gardening book where all I had to index was plant synonyms and common names. The pages were full of detail (paragraphs, captions, and so on), and I wanted to make sure that I didn't miss any names from main sections or from pictures.

I have a short simple book which needs a simple index coming soon, and I might try indexing without marking up as a way to speed the indexing process, and perhaps keep me disciplined as to space and term selection.

Reading the text first

Do you read the whole book before you index it? Some indexers index in four steps: reading the book; highlighting important concepts; typing entries; and editing. They feel that they need to understand the whole book before they can adequately decide which topics will be important in indexing.

I wish that all indexing projects could allow this luxury, but my experience is that deadlines and budget restrictions do not allow time for this.

I alternate highlighting and entering for practical reasons. Firstly, I can often highlight in small gaps of time and on the train. Secondly, I like to break my time at the computer with some other work. GB

From the Literature and From the Web

Ancestor: Quarterly journal of the Genealogical Society of Victoria Inc.

Ancestor is one of the periodicals that that will soon be housed in our collection at the University of NSW.

It is interesting to indexers because of the centrality of indexing to genealogical research. Each issue mentions numerous indexes ranging from large commercially available indexes to small volunteer projects.

Some examples listed as 'Recent additions to the Society library' are:

- *Index to passenger arrivals & departures from early Launceston newspapers v. 2: 1841-1845*. Genealogical Society of Tasmania. Compiled by Sandra Duck.
- *Index to Tasmanians in the Victoria Police gazette 1853-1893*. Harris, Helen Doxford.
- *Young Bros sales ledger, Warracknabeal Vic, from Aug 1908 to Aug 1913*: index.
- *Flinders cemetery Victoria 1865-1995: an index of the cemetery registers*. Southern Peninsula FHS.

In her article 'Leaves on family trees', Sue O'Neill describes her family research in the *Creswick Clunes Advertiser*. She says: "So I had the papers that I wanted and I intended to read them but there are many other people out there who have family who passed through Creswick, and if I was going to read it, looking for my Williams family, then I thought I should take the time to index it."

Ancestor is also interesting because it tells the stories of human lives. Some of the most poignant are described in reports from the State Trustees.

When someone has died without a will the State Trustees search for the correct person to inherit the money. In some cases there are no near relatives, and distant cousins overseas who might never have known the person inherit sometimes large sums of money.

This made me wonder about the primacy of blood relationships in inheritance. I would prefer to see a system where a person's money (if not specifically willed elsewhere) is divided among the people and organisations who have cared for them in the last years. This would reward true effort, and would hopefully put money in the coffers of the organisations who continue to care for people. GB

Indexers Available on Web

Indexers Available is now on the AusSI website at <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/indexersavailable>. Have a look, and let other people know it is there.

Australian Business Entry Point

The Australian Business Entry Point has published its metadata guide at <http://about.business.gov.au/bep/agencies/provinfo/metadata/metadata.htm>

Comments gratefully received.

(email from Ben Healy, Business Information Services, AusIndustry, e-mail ben.healy@isr.gov.au)

Wheatley on the Web

A brief biographical essay of Henry Benjamin Wheatly, often referred to as the 'father' of modern indexing and other useful indexing information is at <http://www.xsite.net/~gvrindex>.

ACTEW high speed internet access

ACTEW, the power and water authority in Canberra, is rolling out high speed internet access to ISPs. See <http://www.transact.actew.com.au/> and <http://www.wired.com/news/news/email/explode-infobeat/technology/story/20448.html>.

This could make Canberra a very attractive place to work on the Internet, and breaks Telstra's throttle on new bandwidth initiatives. (Dwight Walker)

IASC Bulletin (Canada)

A useful one-page summary of indexing lists three varied quotes showing the value of indexing.

A Scottish politician, Baron Campbell, Lord Chancellor a hundred years before I was born, thought that authors who did not provide indexes should be derived of copyright and fined!

Another quote refers to the importance of indexes as software support features.

Finally, showing the continuing relevance of indexing, the jury in the Whitewater fraud trial asked the judge for an index to cover 700 exhibits, all complex documents. (*The Guardian*, 1996).

(Finding it: indexing your information, by Fred Brown and Bill Beauregard, *IASC Bulletin* 21.1, March 1999)..

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Copy should be sent to the editor by the last day of each month for publication in the middle of the next month. I am delighted to receive contributions, both large and small, from members. Please contact me if you have any questions about suitable items for publication. The editor reserves the right to cut and edit material.

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