

# Newsletter

## Working efficiently

Glenda Browne

**W**orking efficiently helps your indexing or editing business because if you are faster you can earn more money, produce a cheaper (and therefore more competitive) product, and meet deadlines more easily. Once you have mastered the fundamentals of your craft you can concentrate on ways of speeding up.

Efficiency comes from thorough knowledge of your field, experience, good communication so that mishaps are avoided, use of the best tools in the best way, getting support as needed, and good record-keeping. The ultimate success is to be able to do all these and still enjoy the work.

This article is based primarily on my experience as an indexer, and the experiences shared by other indexers on the Index-L mailing list.

### Know your craft

Before you start indexing you should have done a basic course, thoroughly studied the key texts, and/or have been guided by a mentor. The best ways to keep developing skills are to join the Index-L mailing list and to attend meetings and courses of the Australian Society of Indexers (or your local indexing society).

Pick up knowledge when you have the chance, as you never know when you'll need it. For example, just weeks after doing the Annual Reports Indexing Workshop run by the NSW Branch of AusSI, I was asked to do my first annual report. Having done the course I had the confidence to go ahead with a new type of index.

### Do the work the best way

Get things right the first time. Minimise proofreading by typing carefully and

checking each entry as it is entered. This saves the large additional time-load of proofreading by going back to the pages and checking for every entry. Another quick way of checking aspects of an index is to scroll through in page number order. You will notice any serious discrepancies (eg page numbers with no entries).

Limit the number of passes you make through the proofs. Most indexers skim the text to get a feel for the overall content (some read it thoroughly), then highlight topics for indexing, then type the index entries as a separate step. Faster indexers make only one pass through the proofs, entering as they read. This method is easiest for well-structured books with headings throughout; it is very difficult for books with complex concepts. It can help to mark-up page ranges for major sections before you start.

Index to the correct level as you go. While most indexers add extra entries that are removed at the editing stage, it is wasteful to have to delete more than, say, 20% of your entries. If you have a page limit you should work out a rough idea of the average number of index entries per page and keep a check on this as you work. It is particularly difficult to add an appropriate number of index entries when working with electronic text as you can't see a whole page at a time. Similarly with web indexing, in which index entries can be added to ev-

ery anchor within a webpage, it helps to have an idea of the number of entries you want to add.

Indexers who want to work for a variety of clients will need to adapt their work. One client complained to an indexer that no-one could give him a quick and dirty index. One way of doing a quick and simple index is to index only from headings within the text. This way the main topics get indexed, but the indexer has some time to spend editing the index to ensure that it is well-written, though short.

Many topics recur throughout an indexers' working life, and it can be useful to reuse some of the intellectual effort done to organise these. Indexes

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# Noticeboard

## Assessment and Registration

In the April issue, the National Committee announced that it had introduced some measures both to speed up and to underline the stature of the registration process. It is now necessary for applicants to have had at least two indexes published, in addition to the index being submitted for consideration.

Please see page 39 of this issue, for more information about the assessment and registration process.

## New Members

AusSI warmly welcomes the following new members:

- ☐ Mrs Carolyn Dare
- ☐ Ms Catherine Dunk
- ☐ Rev Theodora Hobbs
- ☐ Mr Desmond Howell
- ☐ Ms Margaret Lowther

## National Committee

Office bearers and members of the new National Committee, elected at the Annual General Meeting on 21 March 2001, are shown in the National and Branch Committee contacts section on the back page of the newsletter.

## The Indexer

Volume 22 Number 3, April 2001 issue of the *International Journal of Indexing* was guest-edited by Glenda Browne and Alan Walker and contains a number of interesting articles by Australian contributors including: 'Indexing commonplace books: John Locke's method' by Alan Walker; 'The definite article: acknowledging "The" in index entries' by Glenda Browne; 'Building a global legal index: a work in progress' by Madeleine Davis; 'The development of the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index' by Weina Hua; 'Locating files on computer disks' by Jonathan Jermy; as well as articles by regular contributors.

## Beyond Grammar

With Michael Lewis, BA(Hons), MIPC, language and communication consultant. The Society of Editors (NSW) is presenting a one-day workshop on aspects of language structure that help readers extract meaning from texts:

- ☐ **The structure of sentences** Language structure as information structure; Sentence complexity — how readers process text; Ambiguity — types and causes; Misplaced modifiers, including the dangling participle.
- ☐ **The structure of texts** Cohesion — what gives text its textuality; Logical relationships — building complex information structures.

- ☐ **Visual text** Lists — alternatives to the paragraph; Tables — multi-dimensional information; Forms — where the reader becomes the writer.

The workshop will be based on examples from advertising, the media, and corporate publications. If you have examples that you would like to discuss, please send them with your registration. Cost is \$95 for members Society of Editors; \$120 for others (includes lunch and morning and afternoon tea) to Society of Editors (NSW), PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, by Monday 2 July 2001.

## SI Conference 2001

### Indexing at the Cutting Edge

29 June–1 July at Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield

There are just a few places remaining for the SI annual conference. Full details of cost and accommodation are on the SI website together with an application form.

During the plenary session experienced indexers will outline the joys and problems of their indexing specialisms. Lectures include educating users of information retrieval systems, research into text retrieval, chemical structure indexing, online indexing, indexing intelligence. After-dinner speakers are Richard Allan MP and John Wild from Plain English Campaign. Discussion groups will be held on a wide variety of topics from alphabetical arrangement, through planning an index, to tax and financial matters. Workshops include online information sources for indexers, term selection and indexing software. A visit has been arranged to Local Studies Library for demonstration of picture indexing system.

## Indexers Available

The 2001 edition of *Indexers Available* is now loaded onto the Society's web site, at [www.aussi.org/indexersavailable](http://www.aussi.org/indexersavailable). If you have not done so, please check your entry and send any corrections or amendments to [memsec@aussi.org](mailto:memsec@aussi.org). If you are not listed, and you wish to be, please send an email to the same address requesting an application form.

Michael Wyatt  
Membership Secretary

## Analysing, abstracting and indexing documents for databases

There are still some places available in the workshop 'Analysing, abstracting and indexing documents for databases' to be held on Friday 25 May at the University of New South Wales. This is a one-day course and the cost is \$230. Details and a registration form are available at the web site <http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au>

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# Farewell Josephine McGovern

I'm not sure when I first met Josephine McGovern — she was one of those colleagues whom one seems to have always known: however, it was probably about 1966, when I first became a member of AACOES. During the next few years we met as library colleagues, particularly in the transferring of books from the Parliamentary Library to the MINTERLIB store (now incorporated in the CARM collection).

In 1976, Josephine, who had been a member of the Society of Indexers in Australia organised by H Godfrey Green, became a Foundation Member of AusSI. Over the years she served as President, Vice-President, Chairman of the Panel of Assessors, as well as being a committee member. She was a member of the committee which organised the first international conference at Marysville. But apart from these 'official' positions, Josephine quietly undertook many jobs. The strength of AusSI owes much to her efforts.

On a more personal note, I got to know Josephine as a good friend. We travelled to Europe together on three occasions. The first trip in 1987 was as members of a book-buying party to the London Book Fair. At the time Josephine was Vice-President and I President of AusSI. While we were in London there was a meeting of the Society of Indexers. When we arrived at the Library Association headquarters in Bloomsbury we found that we were the speakers. We rose to the challenge and each gave an off-the-cuff twenty minute address describing the situation in Australia. We each ended with an invitation to British indexers to come to our first international conference — an idea which had not then been discussed in Australia.

Later Josephine and I travelled together to the Edinburgh and Chester conferences. We hired cars and spent time touring England, Scotland and Wales, visiting her many hospitable relations in different parts of Britain. Josephine was an ideal travel companion. She was quite unflappable ... On occasions, when we had difficulty finding B & Bs or had to make do with rather crude accommodation, she enjoyed the 'adventure'. And she knew the

importance of going into training for travel. She was always fit and in good spirits.

Josephine will be missed by all who knew her. I shall miss her as a friend and travelling companion and AusSI has lost one of its founders and builders.

*John E Simkin*

I have known Josephine for very many years and deeply regret her passing.

I first met her when she was the Victorian Parliamentary Librarian and prominent in the affairs of the Special Libraries Section of the then Australian Library Association of which I was also a member. She was a much admired role model for younger female librarians in the days when most heads of major libraries were men.

Later, when the Australian Society of Indexers was formed, I joined the Committee as Treasurer from 1976 to 1996. For most of this time, Josephine was also a Committee member, was twice Vice-President (in 1989 and 1990), President (1988/89) and Chair of the Panel of Assessors for some years while continuing to serve on the National and later Victorian Branch Committees until the time of her death.

With John Simkin (another long-term Committee office bearer), Josephine attended quite a number of the annual UK Society of Indexers Conferences and would enliven many a Committee meeting with her tales of our English counterparts.

I have also every reason to remember Josephine with gratitude. She was the proposer and spoke for my election as a Life Member of the Society.

It was Josephine's constant cheerful willingness to help whenever needed — such as arranging our most enjoyable AGM Dinners at Graduate House — that will be one of my most enduring memories of our former colleague.

*Joyce Gillespie*



on a general topic such as gardening or computing can be used as a basis for data entry. (If loaded to SKY Index with no page numbers, the old index entries will be available for 'type-ahead'.) General hierarchies such as the one for embryo/foetus/fetus/newborn/ neonate/ baby/ infant/ child with prenatal/pre-natal/antenatal/ ante-natal/ perinatal/ postnatal/ postpartum and so on can be devised once, then remembered or recorded for future use.

If multiple indexes are required (eg name and subject) the quickest approach is to enter them all at the same time, into the same file, with a code to distinguish the alternative type of entry (eg # before all the names). The different indexes can then be separated after all data entry is complete.

If a book is likely to be changed and reissued it might be worthwhile embedding the indexing in the book. Embedded indexing is also a time-saver in web indexing.

Use electronic text when it is available for data entry of proper names or words with difficult spelling. Cut-and-paste saved me much time when indexing a book on wine with terms such as 'shesh i bardhë', 'Durrëski' and 'rkatsiteli'. Imagine typing them six hours a day!

## Communicate

Find out your client's requirements before you start working. For an indexer this usually means asking

- ☐ who the audience is
- ☐ what depth of indexing is required
- ☐ what parts should be indexed (illustrations? appendixes?)
- ☐ how many pages/words
- ☐ stylistic requirements (italic for references to pictures; page number ranges)
- ☐ expected delivery date for page proofs
- ☐ expected delivery date for index
- ☐ budget available/is a quote required?

You should put your agreed price and conditions in writing. I often write these in an if/then format, eg 'if I have the final page proofs by date X, then I can finish the index by date Y'. This avoids the problem of agreeing to a deadline for completing the index, and then finding that the pages do not arrive in time to allow a decent job to be done.

It is useful to be able to query an editor as the work proceeds in case issues arise that should be resolved together. Most indexers will also send the editor a list of typos noted if the editor is interested.

Successful indexers also communicate with other indexers either at meetings or via mailing lists such as Index-L.

Indexers rarely have the chance to communicate with users of the material they index. Occasionally new editions of a book will be developed in conjunction with educators. These educators can often give feedback on the usefulness of the index in previous editions. Most indexers prefer not to work with authors, although this relationship can bring benefits, particularly in the clarification of the relationship between related terms.

Indexers even more rarely communicate with users of their indexes. At NRMA, where I work on the Online Help index, I am an exception to this. We have a feedback request system in which frontline staff send comments about difficulties encountered using Online Help. When these relate to the index I am able to make amendments to make the index easier to use. In a practical index of this sort it is useful to introduce bias – that is, to index commonly used topics in more detail than others, to ensure that they will be found without question. I have also discovered that visual aspects of indexes are important, and often cause problems. I believe that the biggest global improvement that could be made to indexes is to increase their font size by one or two points.

## Use the best tools ...

The most important tools an indexer needs are highlighting pens and a computer with appropriate software. Back-of-book indexers need a dedicated indexing package such as SKY Index, CINDEK, or MACREX. Web indexers use tools such as HTML Indexer, HTML/Help or RoboHelp (or plain HTML). Database indexers also need software, which may be developed in-house and can range from sophisticated multi-user packages to simple home-programmed MS-Access databases.

Once the software has been bought and installed it has to be learnt. Most of these packages are useful after a very short training time, but are much more useful once you put a bit of time and effort into learning their full capability.

## Use the best tools in the best way

In programs such as Sky Index you can set up a default file with your preferred settings – just start every index in this file and you will never have to fiddle. If you have clients with different requirements you can set up a default for each of them. Default settings include position and style of cross-references, page range style (eg, 153–4 or 153–154) and indented versus run-in style.

Keyboard shortcuts are usually more efficient for experienced users than pointing and clicking the mouse.

Acronyms can be set up in SKY Index so that commonly used terms do not have to be typed in full each time they are used. The abbreviations should not include groups of characters that are used in their own right in the index or you will inadvertently add many incorrect terms (eg if you established the acronym 'an' to stand for 'anarchy', the index would convert 'an apple' to 'anarchy apple'). This is another reason to keep an eye on your work as you go.

Many indexers use a 'Find' command, which groups entries containing the same word. They can then easily check that they have complete sets of locators at each (eg that 'toddlers, breastfeeding' and 'breastfeeding toddlers' each have the same page numbers associated with them) and can duplicate entries and promote subdivisions to main entries if required.

Macros are useful for automating tasks that need to be repeated. For example, a macro can be written to generate the entry 'ABA (Australian Broadcasting Authority)' from the reference 'Australian Broadcasting Authority, see ABA'. Macros can also be used in conjunction with cut-and-paste from electronic documents, eg to convert 'Cathy Freeman' to 'Freeman, Cathy'.

## Recordkeeping and scheduling

Keep a record of all the indexes you have done, including details of book length (pages and words), index length, initial estimate, time taken, and final payment. Analyse your records to work out average speeds and index lengths, and to identify jobs that payed well. Lori Lathrop has created an 'Index Estimator' that shows the time needed for indexes of a certain page range at a certain level.

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*Working efficiently*  
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Keep all of the indexes you have done, for use as samples or in case you are asked to index a later edition.

Keep client details (eg, contact names) as well as project details.

Use large calendars with distinct markings for each project (eg brightly-coloured stripes to show days committed to certain projects). To balance workload it is useful to get indexing jobs that do not have strict deadlines. These include periodical indexes which can be worked on throughout the year (only the last issue has strict deadlines) and database indexing that comes in quarterly batches. Entrepreneurial work, perhaps from a related field such as writing, can also fill the gaps. Susan Olasan runs a workshop in the US called 'Let's Get Profitable'. In it she advises: 'Bite off more than you can chew, and chew like hell'.

### Speeding up

Things that can help speed up your data entry include speed-reading courses, touch-typing courses (some of which are available on computer) and

voice recognition software. A number of indexers use Dragon Naturally Speaking software for data entry. There is now an Australian version available which might work well. We found the normal version very slow to train and of no use (so far) in saving time. Voice recognition is also not ideal for indexes with a lot of proper names.

It is also important to have a comfortable work environment. Get a good desk, chair, computer, monitor, keyboard, and mouse). Exercise and take breaks throughout the day to improve quality of working life.

### Support

If you are busy indexing, get help with other tasks such as household and childcare duties so that you are not trying to index while vacuuming the floor and minding the kids. A clerical assistant can help with some tasks such as data entry from well-marked-up page proofs and mark-up of page ranges. A trainee indexer might be able to help with more complex tasks in return for training in indexing.

You might be able to share indexing work with another indexer. This works OK for biographies, for instance, where

one indexer does all the names, and the other all the subjects. If you have too much work you should recommend another indexer whose work you know, or let the editor know about Indexers Available on the AusSI website.

### Efficiency offers ...

Technical writers, authors and editors do well to hire a professional indexer because they bring to the task specialised knowledge and experience, along with enthusiasm and a focus specifically on the indexing task. An indexer brings a fresh eye to a project, while someone who has been working on it for months might not be able to summon up enthusiasm for the task.

And for indexers, efficient work gives them the choice of interesting and varied work, clients of value and more free time and holidays.

*This paper was presented at the 2001 Conference 'Partnerships in Knowledge'.*

*Bibliographic references for this paper can be found on the society's website at <http://www.aussi.org>.*

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# The Canberra Conference

Glenda Browne

One more rewarding conference under the belt for AusSI. Credit this time to the ACT Region Branch, along with the Canberra Society of Editors, for organising a stimulating and enjoyable conference.

This conference was different from the previous three in two main ways. Firstly, as a joint conference, it provided contact with editors, and the chance to share thoughts with people who often work in ways very similar to most of us (that is, freelance from home) but are also the people who contract us to do work. Secondly, there was a lot of emphasis at this conference on action – getting together to discuss strategies for the future of education, accreditation, ethics and entrepreneurialism in our Societies. (Typing 'entrepreneurialism' I was reminded of the girl who said 'I know how to spell 'banana', I just don't know when to stop!')

Both editors and indexers found the shared conference to be valuable and the general feeling seemed to be that back-to-back conferences with some shared content and some independent content would be valuable in future.

I have to admit to not being really engrossed by the 'professional' issues of ethics and accreditation, but I found it interesting listening to the discussions and seeing the move towards consensus. From the conference we also have plans for future developments in education and entrepreneurialism.

I can't think of many sessions from which I 'learnt' something. This is partly because I shared a registration with my husband, and missed some of the meatier talks. In addition, this sort of talk was not a priority on the program. I did enjoy a session about the development of the Austlit Gateway, and moved one step further in my understanding of topic maps, and databases on the web. The quoting hypothetical was very practical, and in the small business one, it was interesting to hear from other indexers and editors about their approach to work.

There were three keynote speakers: in some cases I was as interested in the person as in the speech. Richard Walsh is well-known to me (by repute) from uni days, as he was one of the founders of OZ magazine. He has since gone on

to a successful and innovative career in publishing, and his talk (about The Three Bears of publishing) was interesting and highly entertaining. On Saturday, Kate Lundy, a Senator from the ACT, spoke about social issues related to the Internet. How she fits in being a Senator with parenting two children (and carrying a third) interests me. The third keynote speaker, Professor Ian Chubb from ANU, gave practical advice about the possibilities of setting up new university courses on indexing and editing. His habit of continually reminding us that someone else wrote his speech was a bit distracting. His speech writer should try 'The web contains information on ...' rather than 'When I was browsing the web ...' when the person who will be reading the speech hasn't browsed the web in that case.

The trade display was small (well, big for an indexing conference, but relatively small) but pertinent. Displays included the indexing software packages CINDEK and SKY Index, Metabrowser for web metadata, Term Tree 2000, Seaview Press (for self-publishers) and AusSI (with some SI publications for sale as well). Hats off to the smallish companies and individuals who sponsored the conference in some way, including Lynn Farkas Information Services (reception desk staff) and Shirley Campbell (stationery).

Dinner was very enjoyable, with entertainment including, hot-off-the-press, 'the Ansett is blowing in the wind', from the satirical duo Shortis and Simpson. Max McMaster was presented with the AusSI Indexing Medal (a report is published elsewhere), and Madeleine Davis received a highly commended certificate. I missed the cocktail party, but I gather that CINDEK put on a splendid do.

Following the conference there was a day of workshops which were enthusiastically attended. It was rather odd bumping into indexers at the National Library all day. Once again, congratulations and thank you to all the organisers for a highly successful event.

## Dates for your Diary

**May 25** Analysing, abstracting and indexing documents for databases, UNSW. See Noticeboard for details

**May 30** AusSI National Committee meeting Everyone welcome Contact [president@aussi.org](mailto:president@aussi.org) if you wish to attend

**Jun 5** Society of Editors (NSW) monthly lecture Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm \$12 for members; \$15 non-members RSVP to [mmripear@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mmripear@ozemail.com.au)

**Jun 29-Jul 1** Sheffield (UK): Society of Indexers Conference 2001 'Indexing at the Cutting Edge'

**Jul 7** Beyond Grammar Workshop of the Society of Editors (NSW) Details on the Noticeboard

## Assessment and Registration

Some AusSI members, via aliaINDEXERS, have expressed concern regarding the changes in requirements for registration, saying that they 'seem a bit discriminatory towards new indexers'. Michael Wyatt, as a Committee member, responded, saying that:

One of the major reasons for the change was because of a common misconception that registration is for new indexers. It is not, and never has been. Its purpose is to indicate that an indexer has a number of years experience and is able to produce an index of above average quality. You do not need registration to practise indexing. Registration can be seen as a gold licence, not a P plate.

The National Committee is keen to develop the present system of assessment and registration so that beginning indexers may have an opportunity to receive feedback from experienced indexers before submitting indexes for registration. A similar system operates in the United Kingdom, where members can submit examples of their work for detailed comment, for a fee. The Committee will be discussing how to organise this procedure, in addition to the present registration system, and would be grateful for any comments from members, which will be considered at the next meeting on 30 May 2001. Please let us know your views by sending an email to [president@aussi.org](mailto:president@aussi.org).

Alan Walker  
President, Australian Society of Indexers

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# Indexers' Medal 2000

## Report of the Panel of Judges

The Australian Society of Indexers could be seen to be at a disadvantage in offering an indexing prize. There are at least two reasons for this: the relatively small number of titles published in Australia and New Zealand and the perception that all major works for the English-speaking world will inevitably be produced in Great Britain or the United States. However Australia and New Zealand have some of the best indexers in the world. But perhaps they are not called on to display their ability often enough. On the other hand there may be outstanding indexes which are not presented for the medal as there are capable indexers who have not seen fit to join the Society. Also of interest is the fact that, at least in this year's entries, there are no works from New Zealand although the Award is for indexes created in Australia or New Zealand.

This year there were fourteen entries for the Medal – thirteen books and one index to a periodical run, covering thirty years. Most of the entries are at a standard which would probably earn the indexers registration. However the work of the judges is to identify work which demonstrates outstanding ability as applied to some particular challenge. The winner demonstrates this ability.

Three other indexes merit particular comment:

***Integrative Neuroscience: Bringing Together Biological, Psychological and Clinical Models of the Human Brain;* edited by Evian Gordan. Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000**

While this is an international publication with contributors from Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United States, based on a television series, printed in Singapore for the publisher, whose head office is in Amsterdam, the work was compiled and the indexing carried out in Australia. In many cases collaborative works tend to be fragmented. In this case the editor has given attention to the coordination of the papers and the integration of the work. The index has contributed to this process especially in the use of cross-references. Unfortunately the figures and tables are not indexed.

***Australian Master Tax Guide: 2000.* CCH Australia Limited, 2000**

This is one of two books on tax submitted by this publisher. The other – *Core*

*Tax Legislation & Study Guide*, by Barkoczy, Nethercott and Morabito, 2000 – has the same indexer but has little subject analysis, using instead paragraph and section headings.

In the case of the *Australian Master Tax Guide*, the indexer has been called on to exercise judgment in the selection of headings and subheadings. This has been done with consistency and thoroughness. Since the work is in its 31st issue and the same indexer has carried out the work for fifteen years we assumed that the pattern was set many years ago. However new legislation is identified in the text and it was possible to single out the indexing of these sections for review and to conclude that the same standard of work is being maintained even in the section which many of us have come to regard as confusing – the GST.

### Highly commended

***Frank Lowy: Pushing the Limits*, by Jill Margo. HarperCollins, 2000**

The indexer here had the pleasant task, working with a well-written biography, of producing an accessible index with a well judged level of detail. The indexer managed to introduce a note of levity under the heading for Christopher Skase with the subheading 'wins Barcelona Olympics' (of course as owner of Channel 7). Although the indexer had a tendency to extend undifferentiated strings to the limit, we judged it to be a fine example of biography indexing.

The indexer – Madeleine Davis – is highly commended for her work.

### The winner

***The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture;* general editors, Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale. Oxford University Press, 2000**

This book is in two parts – 23 chapters of text and an alphabetical section covering entries, up to about a page, on persons, organisations and major subjects such as Aboriginality, languages and prison art; words in bold type within the text section refer the reader to articles in the alphabetical section. Unfortunately this only works one way; not indexing the text of the alphabetical section has left some valuable information hidden, e.g. there is no entry for Bob Randall in the index while there is a substantial reference to him and his famous song in the alphabetical section in the article on the stolen generation.

Since Oxford University Press were employing a very experienced indexer they would have done well to consult him at an earlier stage when he could, almost certainly, have suggested ways of improving the structure of the work to get maximum use from the excellent material which it contains.

Nevertheless, in our assessment of the index we took no note of the above editorial questions.

While the Australian community is working its way through the reconciliation process and there are potential misunderstandings and sensitivities to be considered, indexing a work on Aboriginal art and culture will be a delicate operation. Every check gave evidence of Max McMaster's expertise in steering his way through difficult concepts while maintaining objectivity. The judges are happy to recommend the Medal Award for 2000 to Max McMaster.

Ann Bentley (librarian)  
Pam Jonas (editor)  
Geraldine Suter (indexer)  
John Simkin (panel chairman)



# Indexing for Print + CD + Web document combination

## An Index-L discussion

I have been approached by an engineering firm to index an 800-page technical document that will be produced simultaneously in print, CD, and web. This document has been produced only in print for previous editions and has undergone substantial revisions. I have been asked to embed the index in Word – essentially a 'one for all' indexing pass. Does anyone have specific experience with embedding indexes in documents that are produced in all three formats. I am especially interested in conversion-related issues.

*Lynne Grimes*

I have done this twice, each time using different conversion software. Never again – not till they do something about the conversion software anyway. The issues were:

- It is very unlikely that the client has thought the whole thing through. (Otherwise for a start they'd know that people browse documents differently in all three formats, wouldn't they?) So it will be a learning experience for both of you.
- It is even more unlikely that the company providing the conversion service has any idea what the constraints are on the indexing process – they will probably just wave their hands and say: 'Just try it and we'll see what happens.'
- The software may ignore subheadings, or treat them as part of the main heading.
- It will probably not handle bookmarks and therefore page spans.
- It is unlikely to handle sort overrides.
- It will probably sort the entries in ASCII order, and may sort upper case separately from lower case.
- It may not recognise text formatting such as italics and bold; or worse, it may collapse in a heap when it comes across formatted text in index entries.
- It may or may not provide hypertext links to the text; and such links may not be in a form which you consider satisfactory.

- It may not allow cross-references; and if it does, it will probably not hot-link them to their target headings.

The upshot of all this is: think of all the things that could possibly go wrong, put these potential problems in a dummy test file for the conversion company to run, and examine the result closely *before* you begin indexing, otherwise there will undoubtedly be tears. There will definitely be constraints, but once you know what they are you can work around them.

One day they will get the conversion software right, but I don't think that day has arrived yet.

*Michael Wyatt*

Michael is dead on – run a test!

I have done a lot of these projects, and I run tests if I can before even beginning, and then write the index to meet the worst case scenarios of the software involved in the process. This means they have to know *now* what software they will use for each step. A lot of times, they don't know ahead of time, so you must force them to make a decision.

Things you need to know immediately:

- How will the Web and the CD-Rom index handle cross-references? Can they handle them? Where will they sort them? How will they act? If they can't handle them, you will have to live without them. You will need to duplicate sections, which makes the print index longer.
- How will multiple locators for an entry be handled? On the Web, these are especially problematic. You may have to wind up having a separate subhead for each and every locator, which makes your index very long. That could have implications for their printed piece, so they need to know that.
- Forget about forcing the sort in any way. It's guaranteed not to be available in the online versions pretty much. I tend to write indexes that wind up online with initial caps for Main headings, lowercase for subheadings, for one simple reason – if you wind up having to debug the

mess, and headings have gotten separated from their main heads, you can at least tell which is which.

- Find out about any special characters needed to discriminate between headings and subheadings in the coding for online, and for the character used to end an entry. For instance:

'Main entry:subentry' – This is a common help keyword configuration. It means in this case you cannot use any colons or semicolons in the content of your entries. In your cases, it may be commas, hyphens, who knows what. Find out ahead of time what these characters may be.

- Forget about third-level heads, as they are hard to use online. Doesn't that make it a real dance if you also must have separate subheads for everything? This is where it gets really fun.

- And find out about how the CD-Rom and web implementations will handle what we call 'stubheads'. A stubhead is the position occupied by 'main heading' in the example below:

Main heading  
subhead  
subheads  
and yet more subheads

Commonly, you can create those in two ways in print. You can create an entry that is 'Main heading, 23' and then also have entries that are 'Main heading:subheading, 45'. But you can also create that Main heading simply by having several 'Main heading:subheading' entries, so that the main head does not really have a locator of its own. This doesn't matter much in print, other than presenting problems of interpreting locators on the users' end. But in online stuff, depending on their conversion software, you can actually lose the main head completely if it does not have a locator. So check that out – do you have to assign a locator for the heading to appear. (That's when the lowercased subheadings help me debug an index that has lost main headings in the compile).

*Jan C Wright*

## UK Editors vote for a change

Members of the Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP) in the UK have emphatically approved a proposal to restructure their Society along more professional lines. In a ballot of all members, a majority of three to one voted to introduce three classes of membership, representing different levels of expertise and experience: new entrants to the profession, those with proven professional competence and those whose skills are backed by extensive experience.

The ballot, carried out in November 2000 under the auspices of the Electoral Reform Society, gives the SFEP the go-ahead to establish entry criteria and an appropriate package of benefits for each membership class. Changes to the Constitution will be put to the Society's AGM in 2001, and transitional arrangements will ensure that all present members transfer smoothly to the new structure, which should take effect in February 2002.

The SFEP was founded in 1988 to foster high standards of editing and proofreading and to uphold the professional status of editors and proofreaders. The new structure furthers these aims by acknowledging members' professional development in their progression from one class to the next. For clients and colleagues, membership class is an indicator of a member's competence and experience. Corporate membership will be retained, and retired or inactive members and other supporters of the Society's aims will also be accommodated within the new structure. The SFEP's own accreditation tests, currently in preparation, will support the move towards professionalisation by introducing vocational qualifications in copyediting and proofreading.

Background information is available on the SFET website: [www.sfep.org.uk](http://www.sfep.org.uk). Further information from [pr@sfep.org.uk](mailto:pr@sfep.org.uk).

*Penny Williams  
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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. We are delighted to receive contributions, both large and small, from members. Please contact us if you have any questions about suitable items for publication. The editor reserves the right to cut and edit material. If greater than one A4 page, please send files on a disk or via email in Rich Text Format, Word for Windows, or plain text (ASCII). Do not embed footnotes in Word files.

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