

Getting right into websites

Website Indexing: Enhancing Access to Information Within Websites

by Glenda Browne and Jonathan Jermev
Adelaide: Auslib Press, 2001

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Reviewed by Roxanne Missingham

Have you ever wondered whether Indexers will become an endangered species, slipping slowly into oblivion as a result of publishing through the Internet rather than in print?

While Indexers and libraries are aware that quality information is required to enable access to any set of information resources (or more crudely, garbage in = garbage out) the development of the Internet has not emphasised indexing/classification skills. The early growth of the Internet has been accompanied by an emphasis on search technology to locate or retrieve information resources. The sheer size of the Internet (millions or billions of hosts depending on your methodology) has meant that to search across it has required automated search software. The early cruder searching has been replaced by more sophisticated search tools, such as Google, which weights previous searches as well as occurrences of words, improving recall enormously.

For individual websites, of companies, government agencies, universities or organizations, more sophisticated access based on categorisation of pages (or information resources) is possible. This approach offers greater precision and recall,

terms very well-defined in this new book. The nett benefits in providing quick and easy access to the right information means the advantages of indexing can be demonstrated to information or website managers. Software has now been developed to enable website indexing – a welcome addition to Internet tools. The new tools include products from the DSTC such as 'Reggie – The Metadata Editor' which enables metadata that can be embedded in documents, and HTML Indexer, the product used in this book, which produces an A-Z index page.

Website Indexing, developed by the authors from materials used for a one-day course on indexing the web, delivered at the University of New South Wales, provides a timely review of indexing principles, the challenges and history of development of web indexing, and a road test of an html index product. The combination of a narrative approach to indexing plus the demonstration of new software is appealing. With individual

websites, indexes are generally developed and delivered in three different ways; either through the inclusion of metadata in the pages and the use of a metadata or general search engine to retrieve using this information; through metadata stored in a separate

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Noticeboard

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.

Canberra Society of Editors

The Society will meet next on Wednesday 27 June in the Friends' Lounge of the National Library of Australia, to discuss the issues for the impending August meeting of CASE (the Council of Australian Societies of Editors).

The issues are:

- ❑ What structure should CASE adopt to maximise its effectiveness as a national body?
- ❑ What types of training are needed to qualify for accreditation, and where are they to be found?
- ❑ What form will accreditation take and how will it be administered?
- ❑ How should the new National Editing Standards be publicised and reviewed?
- ❑ What steps to take in opening a dialogue with the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee about the ethics of editing academic theses.

The meeting will begin at 6.30 pm sharp, after our usual fellowship and socialising from 6.00 pm.

A singular use of 'THEY'

A web version of the Attorney-General Department's booklet *A singular use of THEY* has been put up on the Canberra Society of Editors website at www.editors.dynamite.com.au/they.htm. If you ever worry about apparent inconsistency in using they, them or their after a singular antecedent (such as 'Has someone lost their pen?') let AG's convincing arguments reassure you.

American Society for Information Science and Technology Special Interest Group: Information Architecture

SIGIA-L: SIG-IA Web now connected and open for business <http://www.asis.org/SIG/SIGIA>

Check out this site which has some interesting links, sent in by Glenda Browne.

Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW) Inc

Members' meeting Wednesday 27 June 2001 at 6 pm at the Rugby Club, 2nd Floor, Rugby Place (between Pitt and George Streets), Circular Quay.

Cost: Members free; Non members \$5.

Seminar Saturday 30 June 2001 — 'Wrestling with graphics'

Further details on the ASTC website at <http://www.astcnsw.org.au/resources/orgs.htm>.

UNSW Faculty of Commerce and Economics Indexing workshops

Introduction to Book Indexing

Those who will benefit from this course include those who are or who are planning to become indexers, editors responsible for indexing, librarians responsible for compiling indexes. The course will cover the following topics:

- ❑ Introduction to indexing
- ❑ Methods
- ❑ Analysis of text
- ❑ Selecting terms
- ❑ Principles of subject access
- ❑ Headings and subheadings
- ❑ Cross references
- ❑ Alphabetical arrangement
- ❑ Style
- ❑ Editing for publication
- ❑ Dealing with editors and publishers
- ❑ Indexing as a business

Three-day workshop held over three consecutive weeks June 29, July 6, and July 13, 2001, cost \$420

Indexing Technical Material

This course is a 2-day course and is similar in content and outline to the 'Introduction to Book Indexing' course but is designed for those who are producing technical documentation, manuals and technical reports.

Dates to be scheduled, cost \$420

Dates for your Diary

- Jun 27** ASTC (NSW) members' meeting (see Noticeboard)
Canberra Society of Editors meeting (see Noticeboard)
- Jun 29** Introduction to Book Indexing, UNSW (see Noticeboard)
- Jun 30** ASTC (NSW) seminar (see Noticeboard)
14th National Cataloguing Conference (early bird deadline)
website email
- Jul 3** Society of Editors (NSW) monthly lecture, Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm
- Jul 7** Beyond Grammar Workshop, Society of Editors (NSW) (see Noticeboard)
- Jul 28** Society of Editors (Vic) Desktop Editing courses. Enquiries to Brett Lockwood, Training Officer on phone (03) 480 1789 (day or evening)

Want to learn MORE about INDEXING?

If you're serious about indexing, train with the Society of Indexers. Our training course gives a comprehensive introduction to indexing principles and practice. It comes as five open learning units so you can progress at your own pace.

For more information about the course, and our other services to indexers, editors, authors and publishers, contact:

Dept A5, Society of Indexers
Globe Centre, Penistone Road
Sheffield S6 3AE
UK

Tel: +44 114 281 3060
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database with a search facility built over the database; or through an A-Z index constructed in much the same way as a back-of-the-book index. These examples demonstrate that website indexing is an interesting combination of database and back-of-the-book indexing, utilising skills in understanding structured data, and compiling either name (including subject) indexes or services using a metadata schema such as Dublin Core. While this book concentrates on the A-Z list and back-of-the-book skills, it could be valuably extended to a stronger demonstration of how an index can be produced through using embedded metadata to produce a 'virtual index'.

The content of the book is in three parts – the first, 'Information access and the web', provides a revision of

the principles of indexing, describes subject gateways and then summarises the structure of most websites, indicating how websites can be indexed using a back-of-the-book approach. The introductory chapters are very helpful in setting the scene; however the chapter on Subject gateways may be confusing to some readers as while most are, in fact, indexes to subject matter published across the Internet, one is an index to material held on that website (Bright Sparcs). Some more details about why the various information architectures were chosen and which reflect database and which back-of-the-book style indexing would be helpful. The second part, 'Planning website indexes', builds upon the information contained in the first part. It outlines basic indexing principles, has more on the structure of websites and indexing/access terms. The third section

covers 'Indexing software', with a brief introduction to html (you should read an html guide before trying to understand the examples in detail) and a demonstration of creating an index using HTML Indexer.

It is a good read and generally well-presented. To use the book successfully you should be experienced with the Internet, have an understanding of when you should use a database approach to indexing a website, and when to use an A-Z list. I would recommend the book to fill general information gaps and suggest that in the next edition the illustrations be increased to demonstrate html coding and also an example of how a metadata tool can be used to generate data for a 'virtual index'.

Congratulations to Glenda and Jon on this volume and we look forward to future books to help develop skills for electronic indexing.

Farewell

Josephine McGovern

Recollections and reminiscences — Josephine McGovern (1924–2001)

'The light has gone out but a warm glow remains ...'

Josephine went into primary teacher training school in Melbourne as her first post-secondary career choice. She completed a DipEd via correspondence and, later on, graduated in Arts from Melbourne University in 1949.

After some time in Europe, where she first caught the 'travel bug', Josephine returned home and worked in the libraries of Swinburne Tech and the State Library of Victoria.

In 1957 she joined the staff of the Victorian Parliamentary Library. At that stage there were no female politicians in Victoria, and she was the first woman on the library staff. By 1970, when Josephine was appointed Chief Librarian, she was the first woman to achieve this position in Parliamentary libraries throughout the world. Now there were three female Members of Parliament. In May 2001, the Victorian Parliamentary Library celebrated its 130th anniversary. To honour her work and years of service, 1957–1985, the current Librarian, Bruce Davidson, had arranged for an oral interview to be conducted with Josephine, on Tuesday April 10. Sadly, she passed away on 2 April and this interview will never take place.

She became a Registered Indexer and compiled many indexes for the Parliamentary Library. She was a Life Member of ALIA, a long standing member of Soroptimist International and Graduate House (Melbourne), whose entire library she catalogued. Her membership of this latter body allowed the Victorian Branch to enjoy many evenings and social events amongst its genteel surroundings.

Josephine has been our friend, our 'meeter and greeter', our travelling companion, our postmistress, our everything — 'The light has gone out but a warm glow remains ...'

*Jenny Restarick,
President, AusSI, Victorian Branch*

I remember her lovely smile from whatever vantage point she would station herself at to welcome new arrivals to the various functions she helped organise or presided over. She was tall and graceful and of a most generous nature. I well remember a happy Saturday at Dromana when she invited a group of us (the current committee of the time) to have lunch with her and share her enjoyment of her holiday house there.

Jennifer Pritchard

Issues! Directory of members

Trevor Absalom
5/60 Blessington Street
St Kilda Vic 3182
Work phone: (03) 9534 7396
Fax: (03) 9593 9692
Email:
issues@corplink.com.au

John D. Adams
Unit 17, 115 Torbay Street
Macleod Vic 3085
Home phone: (03) 9435 0134
Email:
Adamsjd@ozemail.com.au

Jill Adams
Edmund Barton Building
Barton ACT 2600
Work phone: (02) 6272 3634
Home phone: (02) 6281 2840
Fax: (02) 6272 3542
Email: Jill_Adams@psmpc.gov.au
Website: www.psmc.gov.au

Anne Batt
30 Colombo Street
Victoria Park WA 6100
Work phone: (08) 9346 2917
Home phone: (08) 9362 6943
Fax: (08) 9381 1553
Email: abatt@library.uwa.edu.au

Barbara Bessant
22 Hinkler Cres
Lane Cove NSW 2066
Work phone: (02) 9418 8032
Home phone: (02) 9418 8032
Fax: (02) 9418 8032
Email: bbessant@acay.com.au
Registered

Edyth Binkowski
25 Lawley Street
Deakin ACT 2600
Home phone: (02) 6281 2484
Fax: (02) 6285 3186
Email:
geoff@binkowski.com
Registered

Susan Brookes
71A Palmerston Road
Birkenhead, Auckland NZ 1310
Work phone: (09) 373 7599 x 7537
Home phone: (09) 418 3214
Fax: (09) 373 7424
Email: brookesfam@clear.net.nz

Russell Brooks
19 Cowper Street
Brighton Vic 3186
Work phone: (03) 9596 1585
Home phone: (03) 9596 1585
Fax: (03) 9530 6253
Email:
rbrooks@optushome.com.au
Registered

Glenda Browne
PO Box 307
Blaxland NSW 2774
Work phone: (02) 4739 8199
Home phone: (02) 4739 8199
Fax: (02) 4739 8189
Email: glendabrowne@optusnet.com.au
Website: http://www.Optusnet.com.au/~webindexing
Registered

Lesley Bryant
7 James Street
Currumbin Qld 4223
Work phone: (07) 5598 1307
Home phone: (07) 5598 1307
Fax: (07) 5598 1307
Email: lesley@powerup.com.au

Shirley Campbell
Unit 61, The Hermitage,
Medley Street
Chifley ACT 2606
Home phone: (02) 6285 1006
Mobile: 0418 851 006
Email: shirley.campbell@alianet.alia.org.au

Shelley Campbell
13 Cantua Way
Forrestfield WA 6058
Work phone: (08) 9327 7230
Home phone: (08) 9453 9455
Email:
shelley.campbell@aat.gov.au

William Carter
51A Centre Road
Vermont Vic 3133
Home phone: (03) 9873 4140
Mobile: 0419 305 103

Simon J. Cauchi
27 Braithwaite Street,
Karori
Wellington NZ 6005
Work phone: +64 4 973 7340
Mobile: 021 151 06 01
Fax: +64 4 973 7340
Email: cauchi@wave.co.nz
Website:
http://www.lpf.org.nz/free/directory/cauchi.htm
Registered

Dora Chai
10/33 Anderson Road
Hawthorn East Vic 3123
Home phone: (03) 9822 3191
Email: dorac@lonelyplanet.com.au
Registered

Kaveri Chakrabarty
PO Box 702
Macquarie ACT 2614
Mobile: 0408 6 16 200
Email: Kaveri.Chakrabarty@aspect.com.au

Cecelia Clarke
10 St Giles Ave
Greenwich NSW 2065
Work phone: (02) 9436 1947
Home phone: (02) 9436 1947
Fax: (02) 9436 1947
Email: bclarke@acay.com.au
Registered

Patricia Clarke
14 Chermerside Street
Deakin ACT 2600
Work phone: (02) 6281 2315
Home phone: (02) 6281 2315
Mobile: 0407 930 893
Fax: (02) 6281 2172
Email: mpcl@ozemail.com.au
Registered

Graham L. Clayton
Level 2/101 Waterloo Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Work phone: (02) 9857 1455
Home phone: (02) 4572 5339
Fax: (02) 9857 1597
Email:
gclayton@cch.com.au
Website: http://www.cch.com.au

Robyn Colman
250 Churchill Avenue
Sandy Bay Tas 7005
Work phone: (03) 6225 1941
Home phone: (03) 6225 1941
Fax: (03) 6225 0426
Email: colmanr@ozemail.com.au

Caroline Colton
PO Box 529
Thirroul NSW 2515
Work phone: (02) 9568 4880
Home phone: (02) 4285 2037
Mobile: 0419 609 173
Fax: (02) 4285 7199
Email: index@ozemail.com.au
Website: http://www.ozemail.com.au/~index
Registered

Robyn Cook
20 Gowrie Avenue
Bondi Junction NSW 2022
Home phone: (02) 9389 5250
Registered

Garry Cousins

41 Gould Avenue
Lewisham NSW 2049
Work phone: (02) 9560 0102
Home phone: (02) 9560 0102
Fax: (02) 9560 0102
Email: gcousins@bigpond.com
Registered

Barbara Crighton

29 Turner Avenue
Baulkham Hills NSW 2153
Work phone: (02) 9639 0796
Home phone: (02) 9639 0796
Email: admirable@netspace.net.au

Linda Cross

112-114 Thylungra Rd
Munruben Qld 4125
Work phone: (07) 3365 6628
Home phone: (07) 3802 0678
Mobile: 0419 888 149
Email: l.cross@mailbox.uq.edu.au
Registered

Jennifer Csorba

PO Box 727
South Melbourne Vic 3205
Work phone: (03) 9696 4866
Home phone: (03) 9891 6214
Fax: (03) 9696 4869
Email: jennifer@tdm.com.au
Website: <http://www.tdm.com.au>

Carolyn Dare

13 Renmark Ave
Young NSW 2594
Home phone: (02) 6382 3387
Mobile: 0408 533 854
Fax: (02) 6382 3376
Email: cdare@cch.com.au

Jean Dartnall

17 Kepler Street
Wulguru Qld 4811
Mobile: 0418 711 634
Email: ajdartnall@hotmail.com
Registered

Dominique Davis

29 Lansell Crescent
Camberwell Vic 3124
Home phone: (03) 9889 1618
Email: ozindex@hotmail.com
Registered

Madeleine Davis

PO Box 342
Blackheath NSW 2785
Work phone: (02) 9514 3176
Home phone: (02) 4787 6277
Mobile: 0417 040 598
Fax: (02) 4787 6069
Email: redcliff@hermes.net.au; mdavis@austlii.edu.au
Registered

Prue Deacon

20/36 Shackleton Circuit
Mawson ACT 2607
Work phone: (02) 6289 7505
Home phone: (02) 6286 1573
Email: prue.deacon@health.gov.au

Barbara Dickens

PO Box 4475
Kingston ACT 2604
Work phone: (02) 6295 3633
Home phone: (02) 6295 3633

Hazel Dittebrandt

1/153 Mount Eliza Way
Mount Eliza Vic 3930
Home phone: (03) 9787 9060
Registered

Josephine Clare Douglass

99 Boundary Road
Bardon Qld 4065
Work phone: (07) 3239 0876
Home phone: (07) 3369 5206
Mobile: 0411 669 417
Fax: (07) 3239 6185
Email: J_Douglass@justice.qld.gov.au

Lorraine Doyle

100 Harris Street
Ultimo NSW 2007
Work phone: (02) 8587 7229
Home phone: (02) 9876 4218
Email: lorraine.doyle@thomson.com.au

Bill Duncan

248 Dryandra Street
O'Connor ACT 2602
Work phone: (02) 6276 0331
Home phone: (02) 6247 4057
Mobile: 0418 235 278
Fax: (02) 6257 9975
Email: wdcd@bigpond.com

Catherine Dunk

"Floralands", Woy Woy Road
Kariong NSW 2250
Home phone: (02) 4340 1920
Mobile: 0418 623 645
Fax: (02) 4340 1920
Email: cdunk@bigpond.com

Vera Dunn

23 Pankhurst Crescent
Gilmore ACT 2905
Work phone: (02) 6262 1650
Home phone: (02) 6292 2029
Fax: (02) 6273 4322
Email: vdunn@nla.gov.au
Website: <http://www.nla.gov.au>

Alan Eddy

24 Normanby Terrace
Mt Martha Vic 3934
Home phone: (03) 5974 3445
Fax: (03) 5974 3445
Email: aeddy@surf.net.au
Registered

David Embury

PO Box Box 1161
Grafton NSW 2460
Work phone: (02) 6642 7588
Home phone: (02) 6649 7031
Email: david.embury@start.com.au

Margaret Findlay

3A Goodall Street
Hawthorn Vic 3122
Work phone: (03) 9277 5549
Home phone: (03) 9818 1760
Fax: (03) 9277 5500
Email: findlay@acer.edu.au
Website: <http://www.acer.edu.au>

J Sau Foster

PO Box 134
Potts Point NSW 1335
Work phone: (02) 9273 1633
Home phone: (02) 9358 4782
Email: sfoster@slnsw.gov.au

Roger Frey

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

Alexander Segger George

Four Gables, 18 Barclay Road
Kardinya WA 6163
Work phone: (08) 9337 1655
Home phone: (08) 9337 1655
Fax: (08) 9337 9404
Email: ageorge@central.murdoch.edu.au

Karen Gillen

PO Box 1150
Toowong Qld 4066
Home phone: (07) 3378 4071
Mobile: 0403 337 121
Email: karen_gillen@yahoo.com.au
Registered

Joyce Gillespie

Black Cameron Smith Gully Vic 3760
Work phone: (03) 9710 1270
Home phone: (03) 9710 1270
Fax: (03) 9710 1270

Karyn Gladwish

Robert Garran Offices
Barton ACT 2600
Work phone: (02) 6250 6520
Home phone: (02) 6291 6479
Fax: (02) 6250 5941
Email: karyn.gladwish@ag.gov.au

Sally Jane Goodenough

PO Box 661
Jamison Centre ACT 2614
Home phone: (02) 6251 5239
Mobile: 0416 251 523
Fax: (02) 6253 4500
Email: sallyjg@effect.net.au

Jenny Graham

2 Barnston Place
Ringwood Vic 3134
Home phone: (03) 9876 1599
Mobile: 0413 835 397
Fax: (03) 9876 1599
Email: graham@hyp.com.au

Linda Graham

14 Lesley Close
Elanora Heights NSW 2101
Home phone: (02) 9913 1846
Fax: (02) 9339 3068
Email: lindagae@ozemail.com.au

Angela Grant
PO Box 926
Artarmon NSW 1570
Work phone: 0419 287 136
Mobile: 0419 287 136
Fax: (02) 9460 8236
Email:
Angela.Grant@bigpond.
com
Website: [http://www.users.
Bigpond.com/Angela.
Grant/](http://www.users.
Bigpond.com/Angela.
Grant/)
Registered

Joanne R. Grant
PO Box 58
Tallangatta Vic 3700
Home phone: (02) 6071 2274
Mobile: 0418 419 725
Fax: (02) 6071 2296
Email:
fileworks@bigpond.com
Website: [http://www.users.
bigpond.com/fileworks/](http://www.users.
bigpond.com/fileworks/)

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

Steven Haby
Private Bag 55
Camberwell Vic 3124
Work phone: (03) 9277 5552
Fax: (03) 9277 5500
Email: haby@acer.edu.au

Jean Hagger
Unit 75, 62 Cavanagh
Street
Cheltenham Vic 3192
Home phone: (03) 9859 5963
Registered

Diane C. Harriman
10 Headland Road
North Curl Curl NSW 2099
Work phone: (02) 9905 8521
Home phone: (02) 9905 8521
Fax: (02) 9905 0031
Registered

Michael Harrington
9 Dooring Street
Braddon ACT 2612
Work phone: (02) 6248 8297
Home phone: (02) 6248 8297
Fax: (02) 6248 8297
Email: harrigm@aucom.com.au
Registered

Sandra Henderson
5 Shackell Place
Wanniassa ACT 2903
Work phone: (02) 6262 1481
Home phone: (02) 6231 0303
Email: shenders@nla.gov.au

Beverley Heselton
53 Wellman Street
South Box Hill Vic 3128
Work phone: (03) 9244 6374
Home phone: (03) 9890 8920
Email:
jfbgil@netspace.net.au

Theodora Hobbs
39a Bayview Street
Lavender Bay NSW 2060
Home phone: (02) 9956 7427
Email: re_theo@bigpond.
com

Patricia Holt
PO Box 172
Clifton Hill Vic 3068
Home phone: (03) 9489 5740
Registered

Graham Hoskin
PO Box 47
Beaconsfield NSW 2014
Work phone: (02) 9771 2741
Home phone: (02) 9771 2741
Fax: (02) 9771 2741
Email: ghhoskin@ezylink.
net.au

Barry Howarth
28 Aronson Crescent
Gillmore ACT 2905
Work phone: (02) 6125 4665
Home phone: (02) 6292 4473
Mobile: 0402 221 041
Email:
barry.howarth@anu.edu.au
Registered

Desmond Howell
PO Box 1096
Emerald Qld 4720
Work phone: (07) 4982 2610
Mobile: 0428 822 610
Fax: (07) 4982 2610
Email:
djhowell@maxspeed.net.au

Olga Howell
1/42 Blackman Crescent
Macquarie ACT 2614
Work phone: (02) 6251 3237
Home phone: (02) 6251 3237
Mobile: 0414 786 375
Email: howell@cybermac.
com.au
Registered

Faith Howell
PO Box 45
Currumbin Qld 4223
Work phone: (07) 5598 4862
Home phone: (07) 5598 4862
Mobile: 0407 746 800
Fax: (07) 5598 4862
Email: howdex@uq.net.au
Registered

Robert Hyslop
33 Hampton Circuit
Yarralumla ACT 2600
Home phone: (02) 6281 1886
Email: rbthyslop@msn.com.
au
Registered

Anne Irons
43 Fortuna Avenue
North Balwyn Vic 3104
Work phone: (03) 9859 3014
Home phone: (03) 9859 3014
Email: anneirons@hotmail.
com
Registered

Jon Jermey
PO Box 307
Blaxland NSW 2774
Work phone: (02) 4739 8199
Home phone: (02) 4739 8199
Mobile: 0414 848 493
Fax: (02) 4739 8189
Email:
jonjermey@optusnet.com.
au
Website: [http://www.
bookindexing.com](http://www.
bookindexing.com)
Registered

Tonia Johansen
PO Box 214
Unanderra NSW 2526
Mobile: 0419 985 507
Email: jis@dingoblue.net.au

Pamela J. Johnson
2 Tirriki Street
Old Bar NSW 2430
Work phone: (02) 6553 3440
Home phone: (02) 6553 3440
Mobile: 0411 550 078
Fax: (02) 6553 3440
Email: pbjohnson@bigpond.
com

Lyn Johnson
PO Box 1302
Alice Springs NT 0871
Work phone: (08) 8951 8114
Home phone: (08) 8952 4248
Fax: (08) 8951 8112

Shirley Johnston
120 West High Street
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
Work phone: (02) 6650 9896
Home phone: (02) 6650 9896
Fax: (02) 6650 9896
Email: slearner@one.net.au

Pamela Johnstone
PO Box 217
Wentworth Falls NSW
2782
Work phone: (02) 9880 9000
Home phone: (02) 4757 3045
Mobile: Pager (02) 9963
8172
Fax: (02) 9880 9001
Email: olc@pnc.com.au
Website: [http://www.
enterpriseinformation.com.
au](http://www.
enterpriseinformation.com.
au)
Registered

Clodagh Jones
238 Nelson Road
Mount Nelson Tas 7007
Work phone: (03) 6225 3848
Home phone: (03) 6225 3848
Fax: (03) 6225 3085
Email: jonec@netspace.net.
au
Registered

Anne Just
6 Clutha St
Westlake Qld 4074
Work phone: (07) 3403 4166
Home phone: (07) 3376 8283
Fax: (07) 3403 0101

Carolyn Kearney
66/5-13 Hutchinson St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Work phone: (02) 9351 0293
Home phone: (02) 9360 5793
Fax: (02) 9351 0301
Email: c.kearney@library.
usyd.edu.au
Website: [http://www.law.
usyd.edu.au/~library](http://www.law.
usyd.edu.au/~library)
Registered

Virginia Kelk
1232 Koppin Yarratt Road
Comboyne NSW 2429
Home phone: (02) 6550 4207
Email: vkelk@midcoast.
com.au

Hilary Kent
PO Box 336
Bungendore NSW 2621
Work phone: (02) 6236 9317
Home phone: (02) 6236 9317
Mobile: 0407 556 460
Fax: (02) 6236 9017
Email: hilary.kent@usa.net
Registered

Michael Kuter
8 Cindy Court
Runcorn Qld 4113
Home phone: (07) 3423 1640
Mobile: 0416 197 385
Fax: (07) 3423 1640
Email: scriptography@hotmail.com
Website: <http://www.scriptography.com>

Tony Large
PO Box 800
Ulverstone Tas 7315
Work phone: (03) 6425 1639
Home phone: (03) 6425 1639
Fax: (03) 6425 9642
Email: avlarge@southcom.com.au
Website: <http://www.southcom.com.au/~avlarge/>
Registered

Robert Leydon
15 Pearce Street
Burwood Vic 3125
Work phone: (03) 9808 7730
Home phone: (03) 9808 7730
Fax: (03) 9808 7730
Email: langleyediting@hotmail.com

Brett Lockwood
155A Clarendon Street
Thornbury Vic 3071
Work phone: (03) 9480 1789
Home phone: (03) 9480 1789
Mobile: 0417 552 638
Email: brett@melbpc.org.au
Website: www.ozemail.com.au/~brett4
Registered

Rae Lorenz
4 Glencoe Road
Murrumbateman NSW 2582
Work phone: (02) 6227 5645
Home phone: (02) 6227 5645
Mobile: 0411 444 692
Email: rlorenz@dynamite.com.au

Margaret Lowther
7/3 Chandos Street
Ashfield NSW 2131
Work phone: (02) 9579 6553
Home phone: (02) 9799 8795
Fax: (02) 9580 9607
Email: mylowther@hotmail.com

Susan MacDougall
2 Wirraway Crescent
Scullin ACT 2614
Home phone: (02) 6254 1108
Email: susan.macdougall@alianet.alia.org.au
Registered

Shirley Mackay
9 Pearl Avenue
Chatswood NSW 2067
Home phone: (02) 9412 1531

Trevor Matthews
164 Windsor Street
Paddington NSW 2021
Work phone: (02) 9363 3341
Home phone: (02) 9363 3341
Fax: (02) 9363 9315
Email: tmatthew@mail.usyd.edu.au
Registered

May McCool
16 Richardson Street
Douglas, Townsville Qld 4814
Home phone: (07) 4775 6654
Email: curlew@byte-tsv.net.au

Margaret McGeehan
9 Alroy Circuit
Hawker ACT 2614
Home phone: (02) 6254 6738

Joanna McLachlan
'Bandoola', 1566 Orange Road
Bathurst NSW 2795
Work phone: (02) 6332 8403
Home phone: (02) 6337 3810
Email: library@ditm.nsw.gov.au

Max McMaster
5 Kingston Street
East Malvern Vic 3145
Work phone: (03) 9500 8715
Home phone: (03) 9509 2915
Mobile: 0412 306 381
Fax: (03) 9500 8715
Email: mindexer@interconnect.com.au
Registered

Kirstie McRobert
11 Eltham Street
Flemington Vic 3031
Work phone: (03) 9669 9047
Home phone: (03) 9376 6782
Email: kmcrobert@slv.vic.gov.au

Joan Merrell
17 Brookman St
Torrens ACT 2607
Home phone: (02) 6286 3282
Fax: (02) 6286 6325
Email: jmerrell@teknet.net.au

John R. Merrick
PO Box 490
Artarmon NSW 2064
Work phone: (02) 9850 7974
Home phone: (02) 9630 3129
Fax: (02) 9850 7972
Email: John.Merrick@gse.mq.edu.au

Mark Micallef
PO Box 525
Kings Cross NSW 1340
Work phone: (02) 9374 2700
Home phone: (02) 9368 0670
Mobile: 0416 009 447
Email: markmica@hotmail.com

Colleen Mock
31 Fernyhough Crescent
North Lyneham ACT 2602
Mobile: 0417 245 997
Email: mocks.at.31@bigpond.com

Steve Moss
PO Box 77-085
Mt Albert, Auckland NZ
Work phone: (09) 846 5133
Mobile: 021 627 768
Email: steve@techwrite.co.nz

Jean Norman
15 Elkedra Close
Hawker ACT 2614
Work phone: (02) 6254 7732
Home phone: (02) 6254 7732
Fax: (02) 6255 2275
Email: jnorman@dpcug.org.au
Registered

Ann Parry
4 Godfrey Road
Artarmon NSW 2064
Work phone: (02) 9419 3868
Home phone: (02) 9419 3868

Bronwen Parsons
11 Bayview Parade
North Geelong Vic 3215
Home phone: (03) 5278 8239
Fax: (03) 5227 1479
Email: bronwen@gsat.edu.au

Frances Paterson
142 Morrison Avenue
Wombarra NSW 2515
Home phone: (02) 4268 5335
Mobile: 0408 603 818
Fax: (02) 4268 5335
Email: francespaterson@bigpond.com

Helen Penridge
PO Box 6069
Mooloolah Qld 4553
Work phone: (07) 5494 7311
Home phone: (07) 5494 7311
Fax: (07) 5494 7890
Email: peninfo-hp@powerup.com.au
Website: <http://www.peg.apc.org/~chiron>
Registered

Ann Peut
98 Limestone Ave
Ainslie ACT 2602
Work phone: (02) 6240 8901
Home phone: (02) 6247 5242
Email: ann.peut@detya.gov.au

Ann Philpott
1/6 Scheele Street
Surrey Hills Vic 3127
Work phone: (03) 9830 0494
Fax: (03) 9830 0494
Email: annp@mydesk.net.au
Registered

Bill Phippard
PO Box 234
Henley Beach SA 5022
Work phone: (08) 8235 1535
Fax: (08) 8236 9144
Email: seaview@seaviewpress.com.au
Website: <http://www.seaviewpress.com.au>
Registered

Tracy Powell
PO Box 1467
Wellington NZ 6001
Work phone: 64 4 474 3000 x 3717
Fax: 64 4 474 3161
Email: tracy.powell@natlib.govt.nz

Raymond Price
PO Box 555
Brighton SA 5048
Work phone: (08) 8392 8390
Home phone: (08) 8272 0004
Fax: (08) 8272 0004
Email: rprice@sola.com.au
Registered

Margery E. Price
7a Woorigoleen Road
Toorak Vic 3142
Home phone: (03) 9827 9712
Mobile: 0412 446 599
Fax: (03) 9826 4278
Email: harley@melbpc.org.au
Registered

Jennifer Pritchard
111 Riversdale Road
Hawthorn Vic 3122
Home phone: (03) 9818 2089

Rosemary Pryor
337 Marrickville Road
Marrickville NSW 2204
Work phone: (02) 9560 1153
Home phone: (02) 9560 1153
Email: rosemarypryor@sia.net.au

Jane Purton
PO Box 93
Churchill Vic 3842
Work phone: (03) 5122 6483
Home phone: (03) 5134 1752
Fax: (03) 5122 6730
Email: jane.purton@lib.monash.edu.au
Registered

Sandra Pyke
11 Snead Crt
Mt Waverley Vic 3149
Work phone: (03) 9244 6662
Home phone: (03) 9544-0962
Fax: (03) 9244 6693
Email: gsdpyke@bigpond.com

Sherrey Quinn
PO Box 57
Ainslie ACT 2602
Work phone: (02) 6257 9177
Home phone: (02) 6257 9057
Mobile: 0419 870 052
Fax: (02) 6257 9030
Email: sherrey.quinn@alianet.alia.org.au
Registered

Michael Ramsden
104 Lakeview Drive
Lilydale Vic 3140
Home phone: (03) 9735 4235
Mobile: 0419 889 701
Fax: (03) 9739 6285
Email: mramsdn@bigpond.com
Registered

Pam Ray
67 Hopetoun Circuit
Yarralumla ACT 2600
Home phone: (02) 6281 3931
Email: pamray@spirit.com.au

Louise Raynes
PO Box 2378
Auckland NZ 1
Work phone: (64 9) 488 2760
Home phone: (64 9) 413 9356
Fax: (64 9) 483 2463
Email: lraynes@cch.co.nz

Jenny Restarick
208 Kooyong Road
North Caulfield Vic 3161
Work phone: (03) 9545 2178
Home phone: (03) 9528 2539
Fax: (03) 9528 2539
Email: jenny.restarick@enquiries.csiro.au
Registered

Elizabeth Riley
46 Ngeringa Crescent
Chapel Hill Qld 4069
Home phone: (07) 3378 0576
Email: elizbriz@yahoo.com

Susan Rintoul
PO Box 234
Henley Beach SA 5022
Work phone: (08) 8235 1535
Email: seaview@seaviewpress.com.au
Website: <http://www.seaviewpress.com.au>
Registered

Christine Roberts
2/80 Cremorne Rd
Cremorne Point NSW 2090
Work phone: (02) 9697 7636
Home phone: (02) 9953 3605
Fax: (02) 9953 7645
Email: chrisrob@bigpond.net.au

Jeanne Rudd
1 Bellevue Avenue
Blackheath NSW 2785
Work phone: (02) 9716 6099
Home phone: (02) 4787 8496
Email: jeanner@optusnet.com.au
Registered

Jo Rudd
2/10 Roches Avenue
Bayview NSW 2104
Work phone: (02) 9997 4508
Home phone: (02) 9997 4508
Fax: (02) 9997 4528
Email: jorudd@one.net.au
Registered

Mary Russell
PO Box 1060
Caulfield Vic 3161
Email: mruss@ozemail.com.au
Registered

Vessy Sayce
4 Argonne Parade
Selby Vic 3159
Home phone: (03) 9754 3398
Email: vessayce@optusnet.com.au

Mary Anne Secker
196 William Street
Rockhampton Qld 4700
Work phone: (07) 4923 8118
Home phone: (07) 4927 3639
Fax: (07) 4927 3031
Email: redindex@tpg.com.au
Registered

Margaret H. Shand
52 Rio Vista Boulevard,
Florida Gardens
Broadbeach Waters Qld 4218
Work phone: (07) 5532 4922
Home phone: (07) 5538 1423
Email: mshand@onthenet.com.au
Registered

Kingsley Siebel
11/22 Frederick Street
Hornsby NSW 2077
Work phone: (02) 9477 3149
Home phone: (02) 9477 3149
Fax: (02) 9482 2973
Registered

John E. Simkin
148 Stawell Street
Richmond Vic 3121
Work phone: (03) 9429 8817
Home phone: (03) 9429 8817
Email: simmo27au@yahoo.com.au
Registered

Kathrine Simpson
9 York Street
Yarraville Vic 3013
Work phone: (03) 9626 7384
Mobile: 0418 320 990

Lyn Stead
56 Martins Road
Barnardown Vic 3557
Work phone: (03) 5432 2256
Home phone: (03) 5432 2256
Mobile: 0407 040 349
Fax: (03) 5432 2447
Email: stead@bendigo.net.au

Alice Stephens
23 Lukin Street
Clayfield Qld 4011
Home phone: (07) 3268 3293
Mobile: 0418 755 359
Email: stephensalice@hotmail.com
Registered

Annabelle Stewart-Zerba
PO Box 1150
Toowong Qld 4066
Work phone: (07) 3371 9367
Email: annabelle_sz@yahoo.com.au

Patricia Stone
2 Gillespie Street
Weetangera ACT 2614
Work phone: (02) 6248 3261
Home phone: (02) 6254 5525
Fax: (02) 6248 3109
Email: Patricia.Stone@actewagl.com.au

Geraldine Suter
41 Lothian Street
North Melbourne Vic 3051
Work phone: (03) 9328 2230
Email: geraldinesuter@yahoo.com
Registered

Philip Taylor
3 New Street
Dimboola Vic 3414
Work phone: (03) 5389 1116
Home phone: (03) 5389 1116
Mobile: 0408 313 227
Fax: (03) 5389 1116
Email: pstaylor@netconnect.com.au

Marita Thompson
PO Box 8438
Alice Springs NT 0871
Work phone: (08) 8950 0133
Home phone: (03) 3952 2548
Fax: (08) 8952 2548
Email: kdeent@bigpond.com.au

Diane Thorogood
PO Box 189
Tin Can Bay Qld 871
Work phone: (07) 4128 4755
Home phone: (07) 5488 0097
Email: thorogood@spiderweb.com.au

Geraldine Triffitt
PO Box 537
Mawson ACT 2607
Home phone: (02) 6231 4975
Email: gtriffitt@interact.net.au

Laurelle Tunks
11 Phillips Place
Latham ACT 2615
Work phone: (02) 6234 1135
Home phone: (02) 6254 3875
Fax: (02) 6234 1141

Stewart Unwin
PO Box 6063
Lanyon LPO ACT 2906
Work phone: (02) 6262 1544
Home phone: (02) 6294 2039
Fax: (02) 6273 3648
Email: unwin@vtown.com.au

Alan Walker
10 Rockwall Crescent
Potts Point NSW 2011
Work phone: (02) 9368 0174
Home phone: (02) 9368 0176
Fax: (02) 9358 5593
Email: alan.walker@s054.aone.net.au
Registered

Deirdre Ward
47 Wakeford Rd
Strathfield NSW 2135
Work phone: (02) 9642 7929
Home phone: (02) 9642 7929
Email: ward@smartchat.net.au
Registered

Robin L. Ward
81 Shackleton Circuit
Mawson ACT 2607
Home phone: (02) 6286 2956
Email: martin@cyberone.com.au
Registered

Jill Waterhouse
26 Creswell St
Campbell ACT 2612
Work phone: (02) 6207 2182
Home phone: (02) 6257 4607
Fax: (02) 6207 2177
Email: Jill_Waterhouse@dpa.act.gov.au

Tricia Waters
20 Karoo Ave
East Lindfield NSW 2070
Work phone: (02) 9416 7664
Home phone: (02) 9416 7664
Fax: (02) 9416 7664
Email: WatersIT@ozemail.com.au
Registered

Simon Watt
347 Myers Street
East Geelong Vic 3219
Work phone: (03) 9209 1638
Home phone: (03) 5221 7848
Mobile: 0417 652 198
Email: simon@swpl.com.au

Eleanor Whelan
PO Box 467
Fullarton SA 5063
Home phone: (08) 8272 4605
Email: ewhelan@adam.com.au

Shirley White
PO Box 36
O'Connor ACT 2602
Work phone: (02) 6277 2533
Home phone: (02) 6262 8964
Email: shirleywhite@aph.gov.au

Penelope Whitten
49 Williams St
Watson ACT 2602
Work phone: (02) 6241 4289
Home phone: (02) 6241 4289
Email: pwhitten@interact.net.au

Alan Wilson
14B Novar Street
Yarralumla ACT 2600
Work phone: (02) 6277 2570
Home phone: (02) 6282 3213
Fax: (02) 6277 2622
Email: Alan.Wilson@aph.gov.au

Robert Withycombe
52 Birdwood St
Hughes ACT 2605
Work phone: (02) 6281 2170
Home phone: (02) 6281 2170
Fax: (02) 6281 2180
Email: randsmw@optusnet.com.au
Registered

Gek S. Wong
PO Box 163
Ormond Vic 3204
Work phone: (03) 9239 5267
Fax: (03) 9578 7832

Elizabeth Wood-Ellem
28 View St
Alphington Vic 3078
Work phone: (03) 9499 6883
Home phone: (03) 9499 6883
Fax: (03) 4999 6883
Email: ewoe@bigpond.com
Registered

Tessa Wooldridge
39 Rutledge St
Queanbeyan NSW 2620
Work phone: (02) 6268 6177
Home phone: (02) 6299 0214
Fax: (02) 6299 3920
Email: twooldridge@adfa.edu.au

Michael Wyatt
22 Kendall Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Work phone: 0500 539 973
Home phone: (02) 9332 1414
Fax: (02) 9225 9114
Email: michael.wyatt@keyword.com.au
Registered

From the Editor

My apologies to Jenny Restarick and Jennifer Pritchard that we were not able to include their farewells to Josephine McGovern in the last issue; they are included here.

AusSI traditionally publishes a list of its members (or those at any rate who have not asked to be excluded) once a year to make the membership known to one another. The list, and Indexers Available, found at <http://www.aussi.org/indexersavailable>, is prepared by Membership Secretary, Michael Wyatt.

All the best,
Fances Paterson

Life after indexing

Glenda Browne

Do the books and other documents you index linger in memory long after the job is finished, influencing other aspects of your life? While most of the information we index slowly trickles away, there are a few times things I have indexed have changed my life.

When I couldn't get paid in kind for indexing an encyclopaedia on wine, we decided to invest some of the spoils in a wine company. A totally whimsical decision-making process led us to choose Petaluma, which dropped in price soon after, but is slowly clawing its way back up. Not daunted, when I read a positive review of a medical company that I had indexed for a website of innovative Australian companies, we took the plunge, and to our joy Resmed is reaching higher day by day.

My knowledge of all the potential health problems we face has vastly increased since indexing a book on diseases, and I am daily grateful for all the illnesses that I don't have. The same feeling comes from working in a hospital library where occasional browsing through illustrated works shows diseases too visually hideous to contemplate. And we all moan and groan and head to the doctor for the slightest sniffle.

My feel for Sydney has increased through indexing books for tourists. One led me to Fagan Park in Arcadia. It is attractive and interesting, with eight separate gardens, each designed in the style of a different country. One of the most significant for me was the story of the building of the Opera House. Much as I admire it, and am glad we

have it, my heart goes out to all those who midwived the protracted birth. Snippets that remain with me are the immensity even of the structural base (which was inspired by steps to Mexican pyramids), the fact that a historical building had to be demolished to make space for it, and the amazing concept that we could have had white sails with stripes of black tiles at the joins!

I know I am not alone in enjoying the books I work with. Mary Ann Chulik had the enviable task of indexing a series of mystery novels by Les Roberts. She wrote, 'I'm familiar with some of the restaurants mentioned in the books. Other mentions have been inspirational - I found a very good restaurant named Jack's Deli from the references in two books of the series.' How nice to read, and index, about things in your local area. See the index at www.levtechinc.com.

This is all just one of the aspects of indexing that makes it such a 'delicious' occupation (as Valerie from the UK said at the Canberra Indexers' and Editors' conference).

Reference

Chulik, Mary Ann (presented by David Ream), 'The mysteries of fiction indexing', pp48-54, in: *The August Indexer: proceedings from the second international conference, Friday August 27 to Sunday August 29, 1999, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia*. Ed. by Margaret Findlay. Melbourne: Australian Society of Indexers, 2000.

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Simply the best way to prepare indexes

Indexing Costumes at the MTC

In pursuit of coming attractions for Victoria Branch members, I found myself on the phone with Ms Katie Beck, Costume Hire Manager of the Melbourne Theatre Company. Although she did not feel she had a sufficient quantity of material for giving a talk to indexers on the subject of indexing costumes, she nevertheless gave generously of her time in telling me interesting pieces of information about her department.

Six years ago, when Ms Beck first arrived in the costume hire department, nothing was indexed. She now knows every garment by sight but developed a simple indexing system so that other staff could find a particular costume in her absence and so that they could all be sure they were talking about the same costume at any time.

A three-letter code, followed by a number, distinguishes each costume for hire. They are classified by period or type. For example:

CAV	Cavalier
CRI	Crinolines
EDW	Edwardian
MED	Medieval
MIL	Military
REG	Regency
REN	Renaissance
ROC	Rococo
SPA	Spanish
VIC	Victorian

Each category at present has a maximum of sixty or so costumes. An 'M' or 'W' precedes the three-letter code if the costume needs to be distinguished for 'Men' or 'Women'.

The MTC no longer uses costumes for hire for their productions. Each production has new costumes specifically designed for it and old costumes are not reused. Each costume is designed to fit a particular actor so that none of the sizes of the costumes for hire can be called a standard fit. That is why fittings are necessary for people wishing to hire a garment.

Ann Philpott

Newsletter, Webmaster and Registration contacts

Editor

Frances Paterson
email: newsletter@aussi.org

Webmaster

Jonathan Jermy
email: webmaster@aussi.org

ISSN

paper: 0314-3767
electronic: 1326-2718

This newsletter is sent free to all members of the Australian Society of Indexers. It is published 11 times a year, with a combined issue for Jan/Feb. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society.

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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Send copy to:

Frances Paterson
ph (02) 4268 5335
email: newsletter@aussi.org

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The Indexer

(international indexing journal)
Christine Shuttleworth, Executive Editor
Flat 1, 25 St Stephen's Avenue
London W12 8JB
United Kingdom
email: cshuttle@dircon.co.uk
Corresponding Editor Aust/NZ:
Frances Paterson
ph (02) 4268 5335
email: francespaterson@bigpond.com
Cost: \$28 for AusSI members

Registration

Michael Harrington
ph (02) 6248 8297 (w)
www.aussi.org/profissues/registration.htm

Indexers Available

www.aussi.org/Indexers Available

Typeset by Keyword Editorial Services
email: michael.wyatt@keyword.com.au

National and Branch Committee contacts

National Committee

ABN 38 610 719 006
PO Box R598, Royal Exchange NSW 1225
ph 0500 525 005 (nationwide)
President: Alan Walker
ph (02) 9368 0174; fax (02) 9358 5593
email: president@aussi.org
Vice President: Michael Wyatt
ph 0500 539 973 (w); fax (02) 9225 9114
email: vicepres@aussi.org
Secretary: Lorraine Doyle
ph (02) 8587 7229 (w), (02) 9876 4218 (h);
fax (02) 9888 2229
email: secretary@aussi.org
Treasurer: Susan White
ph (02) 6205 0391 (w); fax (02) 6205 0392
email: treasurer@aussi.org
Membership secretary: Michael Wyatt
email: memsec@aussi.org
Committee members: G. Browne, C. Kearney,
T. Matthews, D. Ward

New South Wales Branch

PO Box R598, Royal Exchange NSW 1225
email: nswbranch@aussi.org
President: Alan Walker, details above
Vice-President: Michael Wyatt, details above
Secretary: Lorraine Doyle, details above
Treasurer: Glenda Browne
ph (02) 4739 8199
email: glendabrowne@optusnet.com.au
Committee members: G. Browne, C. Kearney,
T. Matthews, D. Ward

Victorian Branch

ABN 58 867 106 986
GPO Box 1251, Melbourne Vic 3000
email: vicbranch@aussi.org
President: Jenny Restarick
ph/fax (03) 9528 2539 (h)
email: jenny.restarick@enquiries.csiro.au
Vice President: Margaret Findlay
ph (03) 9277 5555
email: findlay@acer.edu.au
Secretary: Jennifer Csorba
email: jennifer@tdm.com.au
Treasurer: Ann Philpott
ph/fax (03) 9830 0494
email: annp@mydesk.net.au
Committee members: E Wood-Ellem,
J McGovern, J Simkin, M McMaster, J Scorba

ACT Region Branch

GPO Box 2069, Canberra ACT 2601
email: actbranch@aussi.org
President: Lynn Farkas
ph (02) 6286 3259; fax (02) 6286 6570
email: lfarkas@pcug.org.au
Immediate Past President: Geraldine Triffitt
ph (02) 6231 4975
email: gtriffitt@interact.net.au
Secretary: Shirley Campbell
ph (02) 6285 1006
email: shirley.campbell@alianet.alia.org.au
Treasurer: Penny Whitten
ph (02) 6241 4289
email: pwhitten@interact.net.au
Committee members: E Binkowski,
S Goodenough, R Hyslop, P Stone, L Tunks,
S White

Qld group with SocEd(Qld)

Contact: Position vacant

SA Group with SocEd (SA)

Contact: Susan Rintoul
ph 08 8235 1535 (h); fax (08) 8235 9144
email: seaview@seaviewpress.com.au

WA contact

Contact: Ling Heang
ph 0418 941 861 (h); fax (08) 9358 3896
email: HEANGSL@bigfoot.com