John Simkin

Congratulations to AusSI's New Life Member

At a celebratory dinner held in Rossini's Ristorante, Glenferrie Road, Malvern on Tuesday 14 May 2002, Vice President Alan Walker presented John Simkin with a Life Membership Medal of the Society, and an inscribed certificate.

Close to thirty of John's friends, family, and colleagues, gathered to pay tribute to him at this special event, and we were all well-rewarded by John's speech in reply.

It was a most enjoyable evening of food, wine and conviviality, with many people catching up with former workmates of past years.

The Victorian Branch had asked the National Committee if we could host this function in Melbourne where we fellow Victorians could be present and share in the importance of this award. Our thanks to the Executive Committee for supporting us in this request and to Alan Walker for representing our new National President, Lynn Farkas, on this occasion.

Jenny Restarick
President, Victorian Branch

Background

The Society's constitution provides for the award of Honorary Life Membership in recognition of outstanding service to indexing and/or to the Society. Honorary Life Members have full membership rights without being required to pay membership fees.

John Simkin was elected unanimously as an Honorary Life Member at the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of Indexers on 26 February 2002. John was nominated by Jean Hagger and seconded by Joyce Gillespie, who provided the following testimonials. The nomination was endorsed unanimously at the meeting of the National Committee on 16 January 2002.

Testimonial from Jean Hagger, Honorary Life Member

John Simkin has been a member of the Australian Society of Indexers since its inception in April 1976. Prior to this, he had been active in making arrangements for the termination of the Society of Indexers in Australia and its re-forming as the Australian Society of Indexers.

John has held many roles in AusSI, as President, Vice-President and a committee member, a member of the Panel of Assessors and the judging committee for the AusSI Medal. Undoubtedly, his greatest contribution has been as the founding editor of the Society's Newsletter, the position which he held from December 1976 to December 1980. The importance of this was clearly stated by the President, Peter Dawe, in his Annual Report of 1980:

'Since 1976, when Mr John Simkin devised the first issue of the new series, the Newsletter has been the life blood of our dispersed membership.'

Statistics at the time list members in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.

The Newsletter carried articles of interest, often the text of papers delivered at the Society's meetings in Melbourne, short items giving notice of events in the Society's activities, and — perhaps the most important of all — official communications such as the Annual Report and lists of members. The production was simple and elegant and, as Peter Dawe said, it was the life blood of the dispersed membership. We really felt as if we belonged to an active professional organisation.

John carried out this work, single-handedly, with a devotion for which both present and past members should be profoundly grateful.

Notice

New members
AusSI warmly welcomes the following new members:
Ms Deborah Wildash of Hughesdale, Vic
Ms Kate Lyons-Dawson of Wollongong, NSW

ACT Region Branch
The ACT Region Branch is holding an Indexing Annual Reports Workshop conducted by Michael Harrington, Chairperson of the Society's Registration Panel.

Date: Saturday 22 June 2002
Time: 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm (afternoon tea provided)
Venue: National Archives of Australia, Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes, ACT
Cost: Members of the Society $80, non-members $110

Numbers are limited to 15 participants

Contact Geraldine Triffitt at geraldine.triffitt@alianet.alia.org.au

Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills
Cunningham Library staff at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), will present two workshops at ACER, Melbourne in August 2002.

Workshop 1: Information literacy and searching
On the completion of this workshop participants will understand:
☐ how information is stored and organised
☐ where information is available within the subject discipline of education, human resource management and psychology
☐ how to develop a search strategy for online data bases and the web environment
☐ how to select and retrieve information which deals with downloading, printing and emailing
Date: Wednesday 21 August.
Cost $132 per session (inc GST).

Workshop 2: Writing, abstracting and referencing for journal articles and reports
On the completion of this workshop participants will understand:
☐ how to write abstracts for journal articles

☐ how to cite references — APA, Harvard, Vancouver styles
☐ evaluating information
☐ how to manage references using bibliographic database management programs e.g. PROCITE, ENDNOTE

Date: Wednesday 22 August
Cost $132 per session (inc GST)

Attendance at Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 can be made available for $250 (inc GST).

Course leaders : Margaret Findlay and Max McMaster.
Venue: ACER 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell Vic 3124 Australia.

Please contact to reserve your place: Professional Development Unit, ACER, Private Bag 55, Camberwell Vic 3124. Tel: (03) 9835 7403; Fax (03) 9835 7499; email: workshops@acer.edu.au.

Margaret Findlay
Manager, Cunningham Library
Australian Council for Educational Research
findlay@acer.edu.au
http://www.acer.edu.au/library

NSW Continuing Professional Development
The University of New South Wales

June 14   Indexing Web pages and documents

June 21   Synonyms and taxonomies: thesaurus design for information architects

Registrations: http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/

Maureen Henninger
email: M.Henninger@unsw.EDU.AU

Australian Society of Archivists Annual Conference 2002
The next annual conference of the ASA will be held in Sydney, in the beachside suburb of Manly, on

board

Friday and Saturday, 16–17 August 2002. The conference will be preceded by several days of professional development sessions starting on Tuesday 13 August.

The theme of the conference is 'Past Caring? – What does society expect of archivists?' It will look outside the boundaries of our profession, at the relationships that other groups in society have with records, and their expectations of archivists and other records professionals. The essence of our professional role is seen as mediating incompatible, sometimes irreconcilable, social expectations arising from the creation, existence and uses of records.

We believe we have put together a strong program that will be of interest to all records professionals. We are especially pleased that several of the sessions will traverse important records issues in light of recent and contemporary events.

The conference website is http://www.asa2002. records.nsw.gov.au

The detailed conference program and information about accommodation and travel options are available on the website. The registration form is also available for downloading. We are aiming to have on-line registration and credit card payments available within a few weeks. Paper registration packs can be mailed on request.

Mark Stevens, Conference Secretary
mstevens@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Australian Copyright Council

The Australian Copyright Council is running copyright training for writers in Sydney on 19 June 2002. The training will cover the basics of copyright as well as all the latest developments. There are two sessions:

1. Copyright basics
Time: 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm
Cost: $25
❑ what is protected: expression not ideas
❑ making your work available online
❑ who owns copyright?
❑ how long copyright lasts
❑ when you must be attributed
❑ derogatory treatment of your work
❑ Copyright Agency Limited and other copyright collecting societies

2. Writers: understanding and negotiating contracts
Time: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Cost: $25
❑ dealing with publishers
❑ importance of understanding the publisher's contract or terms
❑ standard terms and conditions
❑ acceptable and unacceptable terms and conditions
❑ licensing digital rights
❑ rights administered by Copyright Agency Limited

Venue: State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney

Seating is limited. To book your place, email sales@copyright.org.au

Or download our order form from our website at http://www.copyright.org.au/seminars/index.htm and fax or post it to us or phone Customer Service on (02) 9699 3247

Other training sessions

We are also running training sessions in the same week for educational institutions, libraries, governments, website and online publishers and on moral rights. See our website for full details.

Related publications

Related books published by the Copyright Council:
❑ Writers & Copyright (B80)
❑ Moral Rights: A Practical Guide (B114)
The books are $38 each (incl GST, postage and handling).

For further information about these and other titles, go to http://www.copyright.org.au or contact Customer Service.

An innovative society needs indexers and editors

Professor Ian Chubb AO,
President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee

Conclusion of an address to the 'Partnerships in Knowledge' Conference held Canberra 20–23 April 2001

In case the funding crises in our universities are not known to you, let me detail briefly a few of the key facts.

First, participation. In 1983 there were just under 350,000 students in Australia's higher education institutions. In 2000, there were almost exactly 700,000.

However, while participation in education has gone up, national spending on education — public and private — as a proportion of GDP, has been on a steady decline. From a high of around 6.8 per cent in the late 1970s, it has fallen to just above 5 per cent today. Not a good trend for a knowledge-based society.

Since 1996, Commonwealth funding for all education as a percentage of GDP has declined from 2.1 per cent to 1.6 per cent and is set to fall further. A large measure of this decline has been a 6 per cent cut in operating grants to universities.

This has been exacerbated for universities by the lack of any additional funding over three rounds of enterprise bargaining which has meant that universities have had to divert around another 15 per cent of their revenues towards salary increases.

In other words, since 1996, we have had to fund a 20 per cent decline in revenues.

In terms of per student funding, the government contribution has declined steadily since 1983 when it was $12,507 per student. Today it is less that $8,905.

Most of the burden created by this diminishing government contribution, has gone onto students who, in HECS, now have one of the highest student financial burdens in any developed nation.

And as such there is no real scope (nor justification — given the estimated balance of public and private benefits from university study) in raising their burden higher.

The amount of average government funding for our universities is now around 50 per cent or lower — for some it is below 30 per cent. In other words our so-called public universities receive less public funding than our private schools.

Some say that other commercial entities face similar, indeed greater, stringencies — we don't deny this but we do believe that the commercial analogy only suits universities so far.

Universities cannot meet national needs for new skills and, at the same time, improve their product as normal commercial businesses will, if this means cutting staff or lowering salaries so they cannot attract the best.

Australia's inability to retain its brightest minds — the brain drain — is already having a serious impact on our capacity to create and exploit new knowledge.

As for attracting the best from overseas or even our own industries, this has become chronically difficult for universities, and so even imparting new knowledge has become a challenging proposition.

The crucial statistic in the area of quality outcomes is student–staff ratios. These have steadily increased by about 35 per cent over the last decade, moving from an average of 14.5 to 1 to around 19.4 to 1 in the last decade.

This is significant enough but in some areas — some central to our ideas of modern innovation — the situation is horrendous.

The Chair of the AVCC Information Policy Committee, Professor Lauchlan Chipman, explained to a conference last week that industry forecasts of our need for IT&T graduates estimate a shortfall of up to 10,000 over the next five years. The drop in the value of our dollar means we can't buy-in the experts, so naturally we will need to look to universities to train the required numbers.

But if that is so we are going to have to come up with a way of attracting more IT specialists into academia because the staff–student ratio in that key discipline is close to 52 to 1! So

while we have been grateful for the government's funding initiatives in *Backing Australia's Ability* — initiatives that must be seen as a modest first step in re-establishing Australia's research position in the OECD — we must also recognise that this funding addresses only part of our education base.

Let me be quite clear about this, our view is that if we don't significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in our universities by investing in more and better-paid academics, and cutting-edge learning technologies, so that we can

> *The amount of government funding for our universities is now 50 per cent or lower — for some it is below 30 per cent.*

get our class sizes down and get the best people into academia, then the money that we do invest in cutting-edge research will not lead to sustainable knowledge-based industries.

Our view is one that ties all professional groups, including indexers and editors, directly into Australia's prospects as an innovative society.

Put simply, if we cannot convince the government to improve the teaching and learning outcomes for the professionalism that will support new knowledge-based research industries, then they will be unsustainable.

The drain of our best minds overseas will continue, and we will not

have the money to replace them — our balance of payments will worsen.

We tend to forget it these days, but the last time the US faced an economic downturn it was a far more serious one than the one they are facing now.

In the mid-1980s the US was floundering in an economic quicksand — Japanese and Korean imports seemed unstoppable and US business management was seen as ineffectual in the face of their onslaught.

Our view is one that ties all professional groups, including indexers, directly into Australia's prospects as an innovative society.

At that time, in response to their crisis, the US was fortunate in having some very wise heads who started thinking deeply about where their country's strategic competitive advantage (to use the management economist's term) lay.

The White House Science Council issued a report in 1986 that focused on the partnership between government, universities and industry. In it, these advisers wrote that, 'In this country, we are uniquely dependent upon our universities for both basic research and higher education — perhaps our greatest strength here has been our insistence that the two are inseparable. The heart of the university research system,' the report went on, 'is the parallel education of students ...' Moreover, 'the health of the entire spectrum of American education' — and remember this is the White House Science Council — 'from chemistry to computer science to the classics is important to our national future. The nation can ill afford generations of scientists and engineers unable to appreciate the economic and social consequences of their work or the underpinning values and moral judgments that are the primary focus of the humanist.'

Substitute 'indexers and editors' for 'humanist' in that last sentence and you will get what I am trying to say in the title of my speech today ...

In our discussion paper, the AVCC has argued that a case for around a 20 per cent increase in base grant funding over six years can be sustained.

This is around one-third of the funding announced recently for Defence, and as such we regard it as well within reasonable limits of fiscal responsibility.

Moreover, universities need to have a greater degree of policy and funding stability and predictability.

Too many people in universities already spend too much time responding to changed rules, supplying statistics, adjusting, applying endlessly for the basic funds we need simply to do our jobs, responding to frequent reviews or requests for information ... while all the time, more and more funds are tied or project-driven or supplied in packets.

We are slowly being made average. All Australians will suffer if that continues. Enrolling an average number of students into universities of average quality, supported by government at average levels, would be an appalling outcome.

Finding ourselves in the middle of the OECD expenditure tables on education, on research and on development, on information and communications output, is simply to fail.

Our view moreover is that the time we have available to us to get things right is now short. Other countries have already made the decision about the role of their universities and have started to finance them accordingly.

We know that the pace of change is such that if our universities get too far behind those in other countries, we will not catch up — the cost of catching up, indeed, is going up, to the point where it will be impossible to get there if the gap is too big.

There have been some commentators who have said we should go back to letting only the top 5 per cent of school-leavers into our universities — but I think this profoundly misunderstands the changing nature of society's knowledge requirements.

Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, I don't think this is what most Australians want, or should want, for their children and their country.

I'm sure our constitutional forebears would have recognised and respected our highest aspirations, and it is something we would do well to learn soon if we wish to preserve the material and spiritual wealth of our sublime democracy and lay the foundation for our next hundred years.

John Simkin
Continued from page 49

Testimonial from Joyce Gillespie, Honorary Life Member

Having joined the Society at its inaugural meeting in 1976, John certainly meets the length of membership criterion for nomination as an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Society of Indexers.

Evidence of outstanding service to the Society includes the following:

❏ John established and was editor of the Newsletter vols 1–3 (1976–79).

❏ He was President in 1983, 1987 and 1996, and Vice-President in 1977 and 1988.

❏ As well as those executive positions, John was a member of the National Committee until 1996, including a term as Chairman of the Panel of Assessors in 1990–91, and from 1997 to date has been a member of the Victorian Branch Committee.

❏ In addition to his active service on committees, John has represented our Society on a number of occasions at the (UK) Society of Indexers' annual conferences, often presenting a paper on the Australian indexing scene.

John is a Registered Indexer, well known for a wide-ranging subject coverage, including fiction and compilations of indexes to books published for the publishing industry.

Within the Society, John's special interest has always been in the education, qualification and accreditation status of indexers, and he has written a number of articles in the Newsletter raising these topics for a wide ranging discussion among members.

I consider John to be a very worthy recipient of an Honorary Life Membership.

Extracts from covering letter from Jenny Restarick, President, Victorian Branch

On behalf of the committee of the Victorian Branch, I wish to submit a proposal for the conferring of Life Membership of the Australian Society of Indexers on John E. Simkin.

I attach letters of support from two of the Society's Life Members, Joyce Gillespie and Jean Hagger.

A further role John has undertaken in the past few years, which is not referred to in the letters of support from Jean and Joyce, is his role as Chairperson of the Judging Panel for the Society's annual Medal awards, since

1998. He has also been invited to participate in the recently constituted Education Sub-Committee and is looking forward to contributing to that issue.

John's attendance at, and participation in, international conferences throughout the years helped form strong alliances and friendships amongst indexers and indexing bodies and our overseas colleagues.

Enclosed also is a list of works by John, compiled from literary, library science and indexing databases.

As it was the late Josephine McGovern's suggestion that this honour be proposed for John, it would be a fine way of remembering her quiet but thoughtful interest in the Society and its pursuit of excellence.

John E. Simkin: List of Works
Books

Adult Author Catalogue, 1981, compiled by John Simkin and Marion Piper, South Oakleigh, Vic., Minterlib Co-operative Store, 1981.

Australian Books for Australian Schools: All In-print Fact and Fiction Titles for Children, Schools, Parents & Teachers, edited by John E. Simkin, Port Melbourne, Vic., D.W. Thorpe, 1993.

Cooperative Store Catalogues, compiled by John E. Simkin, Bentleigh, Vic., City of Moorabbin Library, for Municipal Inter-Library Committee (Victoria), 1984.

Cooperative Store Sequels List, compiled by John E. Simkin, Bentleigh, Vic., City of Moorabbin Library, for Municipal Inter-Library Committee (Victoria), 1982.

Education and the Library: Papers of a Workshop Held at Hamilton, July 25–26, 1964, edited by John E. Simkin, Melbourne, Library Association of Australia, 1965.

Subject Guide to Australian Business, Commerce & Law Books, edited by John E. Simkin, Port Melbourne, Vic., D.W. Thorpe, 1992.

Subject Guide to Australian Children's Books in Print, edited by John E. Simkin, Port Melbourne, Vic., D.W. Thorpe, 1991.
— 2nd ed., 1993.
— 3rd ed., 1995.
— 4th ed., 1999.

Subject Guide to Australian Scientific, Technical & Medical Books, edited by John E. Simkin, Port Melbourne, Vic., D.W. Thorpe, 1993.

The Whole Story: 3000 Years of Sequels and Sequences, compiled by John E. Simkin, Port Melbourne, Vic., D.W. Thorpe, 1996.
— 2nd ed. 1998.

Journal articles and conference papers

'Australian Society of Indexers Canberra meeting, 9 August 1983', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 49–50, November 1983.

'Code of practice for indexers', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 2–4, March 1996.

'The employment of librarians and library technicians: issues, problems, possibilities', in *Libraries in Society: Proceedings of the 19th Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia, 1997*, Sydney, Library Association of Australia, 1997, pp. 186–189.

'Ethics: the role of societies in maintaining professional integrity', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 25, no. 8, p. 79, September 2001.

'Fellowships and Associateships: Australian Society of Indexers', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 3–4, January/February 1997.

'Future educational and training needs of indexers', *The Indexer*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 19–20, April 1992.

'Indexing in "How to write a book" books', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 53–54, November 1985.

'Order out of chaos: conference of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, September 30 and October 1, 1993', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 17, no. 10, pp. 3–4, November/December 1993.

'Professionalism: professional standards for indexers', *The Indexer*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 178–181, October 1997.

'Related skills — indexing and bibliography', in *The August Indexer: Proceedings from the Second International Conference of the Australian Society of Indexers, Friday August 27 to Sunday August 29, 1999, Hobart, Tasmania*, edited by M. Findlay, Melbourne, Australian Society of Indexers, 2000, pp. 112–114.

'Talk from the new President: a future for AusSI', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 20–24, May 1983.

'Victorian Branch report', *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, vol. 22, no. 3, p. 26, April 1998.

Running an Indexing Business

Running an Indexing Business, edited by Janet Perlman, Medford, NJ, Information Today in association with the American Society of Indexers, 2001. ISBN 1-57387-112-5 list price $31.25US.

Lynn Farkas

OK, you made the big step and started an indexing business. You read a number of books about beginning a business, and put what you needed in place in terms of work environment, financial arrangements and most of all, jobs coming in. You've now reached a stage where your business has grown and you are faced with new decisions: should you expand, how do you deal with additional compliance paperwork, is your desk in the corner of the living room still good enough as a workplace? Where do you turn for practical, relevant advice about this new stage of your life?

This collection of articles, many reprinted from the American society's newsletter *Key Words*, fills that gap for small businesspeople who have passed the 'I might fail' threshold. It assumes that you have a viable business, but need to keep it on track. It provides detailed, practical and often very frank comments about the experiences of the authors. Each of the articles is only a few pages long, so they can be read and appreciated in the short bursts of free time available in a small businessperson's day (like over breakfast, in my case!)

As promised by the title, the topics focus on the business side of indexing, and cover such issues as tax compliance (be warned, this is very USA-centred), dealing with late payers, and juggling two jobs (referred to by the beautifully descriptive American term *moonlighting*). Don't expect advice about indexing here; although there are a number of discussions about how back of book indexers charge for their services (eg by page or by entry), these and other 'content-based' issues are dealt with only in terms of their business aspects and relevance.

The book begins with an overview 'The Business of Being in Business' (Pilar Wyman), followed by 'Managing your Moonlighting Business' (Carolyn Weaver) with some interesting discussions of the ethics of accepting calls at work, declaring conflicts of interest, and using your 'day job' position to promote your indexing work. 'Report from the Front Lines' (Dorothy DiRienzi) provides a description of the publishing world, and explains why schedules are important and who makes the decisions which affect an indexer. There are chapters on independent contractor status (Kate Mertes) and setting fees (Jan Wright and Nan Badgett), discussions on

low-paying clients (Maria Coghlin) and slow-paying clients 'Late Payment Blues' (Janet Perlman), and 'Outsourcing the outsourcing — thoughts on using subcontractors' (Enid Zafran).

The format is useful, the articles are clear and the mix of topics offer something for everyone. It was interesting to observe lateral thinking in action for solving problems — the withholding of copyright for an index until the work is paid for seems to work wonders for late payers.

One of the most interesting sections of the book for me was the reprint from *Key Word* articles 'Office Space – Four Varieties' (compiled by Margie Towery), in which indexers were asked to describe their work environments. As a person managing a business from home, I found it fascinating to hear how others dealt with the need for ever-expanding table space, filing space, storage room and some way to ensure that one's life was not taken over by mounds of paper! I also appreciated the inclusion of two topics that are crucial to any small

business operation, but not often discussed: how to put together a tender for a job (Janet Perlman), and time management for job scheduling 'The ABCs of Project Management' (Margie Towery).

Was the book interesting? Yes. The format was useful, the articles were clear and the mix of topics offered something for everyone. There is a very strong bias towards the American scene, particularly in the areas of tax forms and employer requirements. While much of this information was not appropriate to the Australian scene, it was useful to observe the things that are issues in other countries, for example the concern over how to prove that you are an independent contractor rather than an employee (something which has become more of an issue here since the GST was introduced, but is clearly not as hot a topic as in the USA). It was interesting to observe lateral thinking in action for solving problems, for example the withholding of copyright for an index until the work is paid for seems to work wonders for late payers. I also found the work habits described interesting — it seemed to me that most of the contributors worked on a number of jobs simultaneously, which seemed a bit different from the operation of many back-of-book indexers in Australia (although since my indexing field is different I may not be fully informed about this).

Was the book useful? Probably not as much as I had hoped, for me. As mentioned earlier, there were many instances that covered peculiarly US issues, which could not be transferred to the Australian situation. Also, most of the focus was on back-of-book indexing. As a database indexer and electronic indexer, I found little of relevance. Even the articles about subcontracting (which are a major aspect of a company like mine, which outsources indexing for national bibliographic database clients) approached this from the viewpoint of bringing in an indexer to independently index a book. It didn't deal with issues like multiple indexers working over time on a project, their consistency in output and the need for continual revision of practices and tools (e.g thesaurus terms). Perhaps this reflects the emphasis of American membership on back-of-book indexing, where our Australian society seems to have more of a mixture of indexers. However, given that new technologies

are producing new indexers in new fields, I believe any future revisions of works like these should take non-BOB indexers into account.

In summary, this was an interesting collection of articles which stimulated much thought for me about the business of indexing. I would recommend that any Australian indexer have a look at it — it will be available through our AusSI arrangements with the University of New South Wales. I would also love to see a companion volume with similar items produced to cover the Australian scene — any takers?

Dates for Diary

June 14   NSW Continuing Professional Development. Indexing Web pages and documents. http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/

June 19   The Australian Copyright Council copyright training for writers in Sydney. See Noticeboard for details.

June 21   NSW Continuing Professional Development. Synonyms and taxonomies: thesaurus design for information architects. http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/

June 22   ACT Region Branch's Indexing Annual Reports Workshop conducted by Michael Harrington 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm (afternoon tea provided) at National Archives of Australia, Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes, ACT. Cost: Members of the Society $80, non-members $110. Contact geraldine. triffitt@alianet.alia.org.au

July 16–18
SI Conference 'The Cotswold Wayzgoose', taking the publishing process as its theme, Cheltenham, UK

August 16–17
Australian Society of Archivists Annual Conference 2002. See Noticeboard for details.
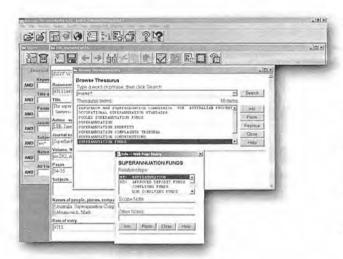
Aug 21 & 22
Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills. For details see Noticeboard.

literature *From the*

Glenda Browne

https://answers. google.com/ answers/faq.html

An interesting opportunity for indexers who want to fill occasional gaps in work. Also a place to pay for answers to questions.

IASC/SCAD Bulletin
vol. 24, no. 1, Spring 2002

The newsletter from the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada seems to have grown this year. This issue includes an article by Lee Brentlinger (pp. 6–9) examining the terminology used in Canadian textbook indexes. This research was inspired by a critique of indexes of Anglophone textbooks that claimed they showed a bias against French-speaking Canada. For example, he found that the concept 'the conquest of Quebec by the English' was indexed in different textbooks as 'Conquest of New France', 'Quebec; British Conquest of', 'New France; Conquest of', 'New France; the Conquest' and 'New France; cession to Britain'.

The article 'The Office at Work' has descriptions and photos of Ruth Pincoe's office, including a balance ball which she bought for exercises but now uses as a chair. 'With your feet flat on the floor and your back nice and straight, it is an incredibly comfortable one at that!' she says.

The Language Instinct
by Steven Pinker
London: Penguin, 1994

The Language Instinct brings together results from multidisciplinary research into language. The title comes from the idea that the basic structure of language is innate, and that the differences between Xhosa, German and Warlpiri are superficial variations on a general human theme. It's not an easy read, but an interesting excursion into

the way our minds work. Relevance to indexers is that indexers work with words.

http://www.topic. com.au http://www. intology.com.au

These websites offer an insight into the technological world of content management, in which human intellect is supplemented by sophisticated computer support.

Writer's bookcase

Just received my 2002–2003 catalogue from Writer's Bookcase (they exhibited at the Canberra conference). Mulvany ($79.95) and Wellisch ($138) indexing books are included. Order from writersbookcase @ozemail. com.au or look at http://www. writersbookcase.com.au.

Society of Editors (Victoria) Newsletter
vol. 31, no. 7, March 2002

On page 4, they recommend the website of the Commonwealth of Learning, which contains an outline of the process of educational editing, and information about distance learning (www.col.org/knowledge/ks_editing2. htm). Might be of interest to those examining online teaching options.

Australian Bookseller & Publisher
May 2002

On page 60, *AB&P* report that HarperCollins is axing between 30 and 50 staff. The CEO issued a statement saying that HarperCollins 'are currently refocusing their business structure to consolidate and strengthen their team towards an enterprising future' (showing that the presentation of meaningful statements is not a prerequisite for being a

publishing house CEO). Shares in News Corporation – its parent – rose by 50 cents in the 48 hours following the announcement of the job cuts. This issue of *AB&P* also has a feature on small, independent publishers. This might be of interest to indexers who are looking for non-mainstream work, although the market is probably small (pp. 28–30, with a 14-page advertising feature).

ALIA 2002 conference

This year ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) broke with tradition and decided to host an outward looking conference. For three days speakers who were not librarians presented their views on the future of libraries, and of societal change in general. I went to the third day, specifically to hear Marianne Broadbent, an ex-librarian, library educator and writer now working for the Gartner Group. The session chair had done a Google search for 'Broadbent best paper', as Marianne had won two best paper awards. The first hit was for another Broadbent's 'best paper dolls', leading her to comment that 'the Blind Venetians are still with us'. Many librarians will recognise the allusion to the example used in library training to explain the limitations of simple free-text searching, in which a search for 'venetian blinds' might equally find information on 'blind Venetians'.

Another speaker who made an impact was Christopher Chia, an IT specialist who has transformed Singapore's public library system over the last few years. He has overseen the introduction of efficient technology for registering loans, and the move of libraries to shopping centres where they are more visible and accessible. His work was reported on page 29 of the Higher Education supplement of *The Australian* on Wednesday 22 May

under the heading 'Cybrary superhero'. Other speakers included an archbishop, a vice-chancellor, and an ex-US congressperson.

The conference was generally considered successful, although people acknowledged that the real work is still to come, and many librarians did not attend, preferring the traditional process-oriented sessions with immediate practical benefits. None of it was directly applicable to AusSI and indexing, although many of the societal issues that affect libraries also affect indexers (e.g. the disengagement of younger people from commitment to organisations) and the identified need for connection and partnerships are also relevant.

You can read some of the conference papers at http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/alia2002/papers.html.

ALIA 2002 conference exhibition

The DocMatrix stand had brochures for their practical books for library education. The third edition of *Learn Subject Access* was edited by AusSI member Lynn Farkas.

I was also interested in ZPORTAL from fretwell-downing informatics. (I will be pleased when the trend towards lower case proper names fades, as it inevitably must. It looks plain wrong to me.) This software enables cross-database searching of internal and external resources. Its use in conjunction with Z'MBOL enables the exploitation of metadata from disparate resources (http://www.fdgroup.com/fdi).

You can browse the ALIA conference virtual exhibition at http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/alia2002/virtualexhibition.html. Clicking on links in the map takes you to the relevant company's website.

Snippets — Investigating Inktomi

I have recently been involved in the assessment of information retrieval after the transfer of a large knowledge base with a book-style index to an intranet. The indexing terms were all split into individual words and used as metadata. Thus an index entry 'Goods and Services Tax' became four separate metadata terms 'Goods, Services, Tax, GST'. (The term GST was generated by the synonym table).

Luckily time was allocated to assessment of search because I found that many topics were not indexed. We eventually discovered that the reasons for this were:

☐ Initially our licence did not cover the number of topics we had.

☐ The spider that trawls through the site following links to indexable topics did not start at the main menu (because of the coding it used). Therefore only topics that could be reached by internal links from other topics were indexed. (This actually included most of the topics, as we have 'breadcrumbs' at the top of each topic linking to each level above that topic. So if the spider reaches a page on koalas, it can follow the breadcrumbs to marsupials, mammals, animals and so on, and then back down again from these to other branches).

☐ The system was set to eliminate topics as duplicates if they had the same title and description. Our descriptions currently come from the top of each page of text, and we have many topics with the same title and introductory paragraph that have different content at the end (e.g. a topic might be a procedure called 'Change contact details' with common information in an introductory paragraph, but specific information later). So this setting was causing the elimination of many relevant topics.

Other issues have been to do with the setting of spam levels (since we don't expect spam at this stage we have set them quite high) and weighting for different parts of the document when establishing relevance. For example, we have increased the significance of metadata, and decreased the significance of title words compared to the default.

Another issue is the use of Boolean 'or' in searches, through which we get many hits. (For example, a search for 'goods services tax' finds any topic with the word 'tax', or the word 'goods' or the word 'services'). Users find the number of hits overwhelming. The solution here is training, and provision of quality metadata so that the needed information comes in the top ten hits where possible. The alternative is to use Boolean 'and', where every word in the search must be present in the hits. The disadvantages of this are that two other search systems associated with the organisation use 'or', so we would be introducing inconsistencies, and this method is unforgiving of searches that do not exactly match the results.

Overall, the move to the intranet has resulted in the loss of ready access to information, as the change from a book-style index with carefully-worded subdivisions to hidden metadata that must be searched is not easy. The ability to search full-text is a gain, particularly for very specific searches, however, until metadata is created specifically for this search system, and until training is introduced, the full capability of Search is not likely to be realised.

From the Editor

Congratulations to John Simkin, AusSI Honorary life member, and founding editor of our Newsletter!

In this issue we conclude Professor Ian Chubb's rather dire message about funding for our universities; Lynn Farkas reviews *Running an Indexing Business*; and Glenda Browne has contributed her regular 'From the Literature' browse amongst publications sent in for inclusion in the AusSI library, which is housed at the University of New South Wales.

If there are any issues you would like to see discussed in the Newsletter, please drop me a line any time.

Cheers,

Frances Paterson

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