

Newsletter

Mining the archive AusSI and *The Indexer*

Hazel Bell sends information to add to our 'Mining the archive' series published in the Jan/Feb and May 2002 issues.

Mining the archive

I have been sent copies of the last two issues of the AusSI Newsletter, and am particularly interested to see your new feature, 'Mining the archive', as I was editor of *The Indexer* from vol. 11 to vol. 19, 1978–95.

I compiled a classified contents list for the first nineteen volumes of *The Indexer*, which was printed in vol. 20, no. 3, April 1997. You could consult this list to find articles on Australia. The section 'Countries and languages' lists three major articles on Australia, only one of which is cited in your 'Mining the archives'. The missing two are: 'Room for improvement in Australia' by H Godfrey Green in vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 2–5, and 'Indexing in a State Parliamentary Library (Australia)' by Josephine McGovern in vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 78–80/86.

The list has been updated for each volume since 1995, the supplements printed in *The Indexer*, and the fully cumulated list is available on the Society of Indexers website, where you could consult it and search on the word 'Australia' to find further items.

You seem not to have a copy of Volume 20, No. 4, October 1977. This issue included the second instalment of my series, 'History of societies of indexers', which covered the affiliation to SI of ASI, AusSI & IASC. I have all this series myself on disk, and will paste in for you below the section there on AusSI.

Your section under 'Volume 20 1996–97' begins: 'With Vol. 20 the format changes to quarto'. In fact the format then changed from quarto to A4.

Australasian societies

The first published membership list of the Society of Indexers, for 31 January 1958, includes the National Library Service of Wellington, New Zealand, as an overseas institutional member. James E. Traue, who worked there, served as New Zealand's Corresponding Member to SI. In 1960 the SI Membership Secretary, Alfred Talbot, who worked in the London office of the Bank of Adelaide, asked the daughter of a former bank colleague, Brenda Miller, a school teacher and librarian in Canberra, to become SI's Corresponding Member in Australia. *The Indexer* for Autumn 1963 records her being entertained by SI Officers on her visit to the UK.

In 1972 H. Godfrey Green, a freelance indexer in Glen Iris, Victoria, became SI's Australian Correspondent, actively promoting the formation of a Society of Indexers there. He enrolled more than forty personal and institutional members, and a meeting held at his home resulted in the formal adoption of a constitution for the Society of Indexers in Australia (*The Indexer*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 1973, p. 180). He provided for the April 1972 *Indexer* a four-page article with the splendid title, 'Room for improvement in Australia', justifying this judgement in context with:

The index seems to be the first thing that publishers here try to reduce or dispense with when the cost of publishing a work becomes too high.

For this reason perhaps, most indexes in Australian publications

are of poor quality, often containing inaccuracies and for the most part handling the subject concept approach badly ...

Much could be done to improve the quality of indexing in Australia. Many appear to be a bad selection of topics, not sufficiently comprehensive, and assist the reader very little.

Brenda Miller wrote in the April 1973 *Indexer* of 'Indexing children's books', particularly in Australia.

In the words of Clyde Garrow and Jean Hagger ('The Australian Society of Indexers', in Knight, G. N. *Indexing, the art of*, 1979), as the

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Notice

NSW Branch Panel/Workshops

The NSW Branch is planning a day of panel/workshops on Saturday 24 August 2002, covering the topics:

- indexing periodicals (journals, magazines, newsletters)
- indexing biographies

The workshop on periodical indexing will be introduced by Deirdre Ward, a very experienced indexer of medical journals. Trevor Matthews will introduce the biographical workshop, with a summary of the advice of Hazel Bell, from her publications on this topic.

The workshops will be held at LBC (Thomson), 100 Harris Street, Pyrmont.

Full details will be published in the August issue of the Newsletter.

For more information, contact Alan Walker at alan.walker@so54.aone.net.au

Victorian Branch News

Invitation to General Meeting of the Australian Society of Indexers Victorian Branch

On Thursday 18 July 2002 at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell Vic 3124. At 6.00 p.m. for 6.30 p.m. ACER is close to Camberwell Railway Station.

Indexing online content using a metadata application profile

A case study from The Learning Federation.
Presenters: Steven Haby, Curriculum Corporation and Nigel Ward, The Learning Federation.

A talk about the innovative work of The Learning Federation, Metadata Profile, SCIS, ScOT and the associated indexing, metadata and thesaurus applications. Visit the Curriculum Corporation to see their range of web based projects
<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/>

After the meeting, we shall be dining at a nearby medium-priced restaurant with Steven and Nigel as our dinner guests.

RSVP to Margaret Findlay, ACER, phone 03 9277 5549 or email findlay@acer.edu.au by 15 July 2002

Walk into history on Collins Street

On Tuesday 13 August we have been invited to the Archives of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria at 156 Collins Street Melbourne 3000. This is a wonderful old building which is still called the Assembly Hall, and in fact continues to have that function. We can look down into the meeting room as we climb the stairs. Enter via the main steps (above Kay Craddock's Antiquarian Bookshop) admiring the beautiful stained-glass windows and glorious sweeping staircase.

As the Archives office and collection is on the first floor, not the second, because between the ground and the first floor there is a half floor, the mezzanine, to provide for the space that the hall takes up — we can either ascend the stairs or take the lift to this higher realm. We shall meet in the foyer just before 2 p.m. and you can all determine your individual levels of fitness.

The Archivist, Ms Chris Palmer, will talk about and show different record formats, old indexes in previous/present use, and a case history which is part of their rolling program, of calling records in to a central archive.

I am sure that our members will be fascinated by the differing formats of information this collection holds, and the various ways that information, or indexes to it, have been created over the years — and what, sadly, needs to be done to ensure this collection remains of value.

Other questions we might ask of the Archivist include: What do the volunteers do for you? Where do you find them? When you are about to receive a large collection from a country presbytery, what decisions, strategies, begging letters etc., are involved, from the time you first hear of this particular collection, to when it is received at Collins Street and how did you go about processing it?

As the physical location of the collection is rather cramped, we are limiting this tour to twelve persons.

Please reply to Jenny Restarick, Ph/Fax 03 9528 2539 or email jenny.restarick@csiro.au

board

Training opportunities

- 30 July 2002, Back-of-Book Indexing with Max McMaster at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).
- 31 July 2002, Database/Pictorial Indexing with Max McMaster at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).
- 1 August 2002, half day, Journal Indexing, with Max McMaster at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Contact Max McMaster for further information by email at mindexer@interconnect.com.au or phone: 03 9500 8715

Indexing courses endorsed by the Australian Society of Indexers

Despite predictions that computers and search engines would make indexing obsolete, quality indexes are here to stay as readers, researchers, publishers, librarians and others admit that quality indexing adds context and integrity to a world otherwise populated by disorganised information.

CAVAL Collaborative Solutions is happy to offer the following training courses for those responsible for the provision of indexes to assist locating information.

Indexing books – an introduction

This back-of-book indexing workshop provides an introduction to the theory of indexing and the opportunity to apply this in practical exercises. Authors, editors, indexers, librarians and technical writers who are responsible for providing quality indexes will benefit from this workshop.

Indexing databases and pictorial materials

Most organisations devote time and energy to database building, and then neglect to provide enough assistance to find the resources. Pictorial materials, such as maps, photographs, charts, etc, comprise rich sources of information, but their non-textual (i.e. pictorial) nature, can make them particularly difficult to manage, store, and access. This workshop provides the opportunity for those responsible for the management and access of databases and pictorial materials to learn and practice indexing fundamentals such as writing abstracts and selecting index terms.

All courses are developed and presented by Max McMaster who has been a freelance indexer for the past nine years. Although he has mainly worked on back-of-book indexing, he is also highly experienced in database indexing, journal indexing and web-indexing. He arrived at indexing after spending 19 years in the library and information fields, mainly involved with scientific disciplines in State government departments and CSIRO. He has in excess of 900 indexes to his name. Max lectures on indexing to editing and publishing students at RMIT, and runs indexing training courses for the Australian Society of Indexers and others all around Australia. Max has been awarded the prestigious Australian Society of Indexers Medal on three occasions.

2002 Schedule

Indexing books – an introduction

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 12 August | Cairns |
| 15 August | Brisbane |
| 2 September | Perth |
| 5 September | Adelaide |
| 30 September | Auckland |
| 3 October | Wellington |
| 7 October | Christchurch |
| 4 November | Canberra |
| 6 November | Newcastle |

Indexing databases and pictorial materials

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 13 August | Cairns |
| 16 August | Brisbane |
| 3 September | Perth |
| 6 September | Adelaide |
| 1 October | Auckland |
| 4 October | Wellington |
| 8 October | Christchurch |
| 5 November | Canberra |
| 7 November | Newcastle |

Venues: To be announced

Cost per day: \$220.00 or \$198.00 (CAVAL and ALIA individual members)

To register to attend any of the above sessions, please use the online registration form at http://www.caval.edu.au/Services/rego_form.html

For further information please contact Eve Cornish at evenc@caval.edu.au. CAVAL is a registered training organisation. http://www.caval.edu.au/Services/edu_train_services.html#Indexing

A 2 Z Weblinks

Please feel free to visit my homepage 'A 2 Z Weblinks'. This site will be updated on a monthly basis. It contains websites organised by title through A 2 Z in relation to Australasian weblinks.

The site can be located at <http://www.users.bigpond.com/aussieweb01/A-Z.htm>

Rebecca Carroll
Library Technician

Indexers and Indexes in Fact & Fiction

Hazel K. Bell (editor), with a foreword by A. S. Byatt, (London, The British Library, 2001), 160pp., £16.00

Reviewed by Trevor Matthews, freelance indexer

This elegantly produced small book is an anthology of extracts illustrating the quaint, the eccentric, the witty and the blatantly bad, among published indexes, ancient and modern, as well as the quaint and often eccentric indexers that have appeared in the pages of novels and short stories. The extracts number eighty-eight in all. Fifty-seven are from published indexes to non-fiction and fourteen are indexes to novels and verse; a further seventeen depict indexers in fiction. Aiming to delight—and possibly dismay—the professional indexer, Hazel Bell presents the extracts largely for their entertainment and curiosity value, definitely not for their use as exemplars or templates of good indexing practice. Readers of *The Indexer* who enjoyed the many amusing snippets, paragraphs and articles on indexing and indexers that enlivened the pages of that journal during the eighteen years Hazel Bell was its editor will be pleased to find that a good number of those items are reproduced in this collection.

Most of the extracts are from actual indexes—the ‘indexes in fact’ referred to in the title. Ten are from pre-nineteenth-century publications, starting with the first printed index (to a fifteenth century German edition of St Augustine’s *De arte praedicani*). Eleven are from nineteenth-century indexes, including samples from Ruskin (who used his indexes to amend and emend the text in his books) and Carlyle (whose inverted, overstuffed and comma-laced headings appear now so utterly Victorian):

Foolish, privilege of the, to be governed by the Wise

Foreign Office, our, astonishing conditions of

French People, the, a kind of Mes-siah people, very glorious indeed

Thirty-six of the extracts are from twentieth-century indexes, while another fourteen are from indexes to fiction and verse.

Indexes in fact

Humour is a thread running through much of the anthology. In that sense, the book can be read as an updated version of the chapter ‘Humour in Indexing’ in G. Norman Knight’s now out-of-print book *Indexing, the Art of* (in which a number of the items in this collection also appear). Some of the humour in the extracts comes from indexes whose shaky technique or very badness makes one smile, demon-

strating Knight’s comment that ‘humour in an index is usually the result of bad indexing technique’. It was certainly poor technique by the indexer of a book of hymns and sacred songs to index them according to the first five words of each hymn: ‘There is a land mine eyes have seen’ thus appearing in the index as: ‘There is a land mine’. And poor technique it is to rely on a computer to select the main headings. The sentence ‘This guide is a mammoth work ...’ apparently generated the entry ‘mam-moths’ in the index to a guide to Britain’s nature reserves (prompting Hazel Bell’s chapter heading: ‘Mon-strous entry’).

But it could only be a complete lack of indexing technique that was responsible for some of the subentries in Keith Joseph’s book on political and economic equality. Presumably believing in what M.D. Anderson once called synthetic indexing, the indexer gathered together all references to foodstuffs under the main heading ‘menus’. And what subentries do we find there?—cakes (referring to lines in the text discussing ‘a cake-sharing mentality’ and ‘the value of the national cake’); omelettes (a quote from Beatrice Webb that included the words ‘you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs’; and salt (‘that figures compiled on that basis should be taken with a pinch of salt’).

Indexes can also be humorous by design. These are the ones Hazel Bell delights in. She offers us the witty, cryptic, and adroitly ambiguous index entries in Julian Barnes’s *Letters from London 1990–1995*, ‘an index of high comedy’. Bell enjoys Barnes’s cumulative index paragraphs (‘Alcohol: Liebfraumilch and Ron Brown MP; champagne and Ron Brown MP; sparkling wine and Ron Brown MP’) as well as the sequential ones in Norman Douglas’s book recounting his so-journ in various Austrian villages. His enjoyment of one particular village, Tiefs, is apparent from the index (‘*Tiefs village*, 22, 96; visit to its tavern, 26; another visit, 65; another, 95; another, 118; destroyed by fire, 166’). Also taking her fancy are the cross-references in a legal book of 1724: ‘Cattle see Clergy; Convicts see Clergy; Election see Bribery; King see treason’; the mischievous cross-reference in a book on the Lake District: ‘dump see Barrow-in-Furness’ (which had to be removed in later editions); the provocative style and ‘gleefully disproportionate’ length of (presumably) George Bernard Shaw’s indexes to the prefaces of his plays; the humorous entries in Douglas Matthews’ index to *The Frank Muir*; and the prudently forbearing entry in a book on *Great Operatic Disasters*: ‘Incompetence — better not specified’.

Omissions are the theme in other extracts. Dale Spender simply omits entries to men in the index to her book *Man Made Language* on the ground that ‘what is good for the gander is good for the goose ... how many indexes written by men make women invisible?’ Could this not be a simple stratagem that feminist members of AusSI could use when their publishers require them to shorten a submitted index or to keep the index within an unreasonably brief number of pages? [Reply in preparation—Ed.] The omission stratagem is also employed in the index that forms part of Nabokov’s novel *Pale Fire*; enemies

are disdainfully dismissed by pointedly not including them in the entries but posting the comment '(not in Index)' whenever their names appear in subheadings.

Indexes, as a number of extracts testify, have frequently been used to wound or dismiss. Julian Barnes indexes Margaret Thatcher in these terms: 'rumours of lunacy; receives electric shocks in bath; bawls like a fish-wife; accused of war crimes; new version of St Augustine; how not to make the poor richer', and so it goes on. As Bell comments, the uncontrolled expression of bias by the indexer can be an inadvertent cause of humour. Other marvellous examples are to hand in the book: the victims of such 'Parthian arrows' include Field Marshal Haig (at the hands of Lloyd George); Lord Hailsham 'frequently Quintin Hogg' (by Bernard Levin); Ronald Reagan (by Ronald Wilson); and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (by his jilted wife). Margaret Cook's entry for her former husband shafts him thus: 'outbursts of temper; and guilt transference; heavy drinking; weight problems; sexual problems'. As H.B. Wheatley once said, 'indexes need not necessarily be dry, and in some cases they form the most interesting portion of the book.'

Some of the entertaining indexes reproduced in the book are deliberate parodies. We are given (via Judy Batchelor) an anti-index, where all the page references are incorrect, quite fitting for a book which proclaims the Negation of Being; and a para-index (from a Lucy Ellmann novel), which concerns itself not with the text but the subtext and various personal concerns of the author, and where the cross-reference directives *see* and *see also* are replaced by other imperatives: for example,

Divorce, *cut* your losses and go to Las Vegas;
Found objects, *keep*
Happenings, *check* your Filofax
Kant, Immanuel, *read*

Among the parodies, as an example of what Hazel Bell deliciously terms 'transindexuality', is the scholarly index Virginia Woolf appended to her novel *Orlando* to endow it with the apparent status of a biography. Here Orlando's change of sex from a man to a woman is neatly captured in the entry for the main character where the pronouns undergo an appropriate transsexual transformation.

Also a parody is G.V. Carey's index

to the second edition of his brief twelve-page pamphlet, *Making an Index*. Yet his spoof entries are didactically effective. The following five entries tell neophyte indexers all they need to know about blind and circular cross-references:

Chase, wild goose. See Von Kluck
Goose chase, wild. See Kluck von Kluck, von. See Von Kluck
Von Kluck. See Kluck, von
Wild goose chase. See Kluck, von

Index users

Indexers and Indexes in Fact and Fiction throws interesting light on the questions, Who uses indexes? and How are indexes used? The usual answer is that users fall into two categories: those who have already read the book from cover to cover and those who have not. The first group use the index to recover information: to locate information that they already know is in the book. The second use the index to discover information: to find out whether or not the book deals with a particular topic. Politicians and celebrities who, on picking up a book, turn immediately to the index to see if their names are there, fall into the second group. Less vainglorious readers may also 'read books Hebraically [and] begin where others usually end' (as Jonathon Swift put it), but do so for quite utilitarian reasons. 'For', as Swift commented, 'to enter the palace of learning by the great gate requires an expense of time and forms, therefore, men of much haste and little ceremony are content to get in by the back door.'

To judge from the comments by indexers and indexers manqué in this book (and here one would have to include A.S. Byatt who contributes the foreword), this dichotomy is far too simple. It fails to account for those who *read* indexes for *pleasure*. Take the indexer William S. Heckscher who, in the book's opening extract, states his preference for the index 'which should enable us to spend a peaceful evening in bed, reading such an Index, as if we were reading a good novel.' Accordingly, he pleads for indexes to 'be made so readable that one may *begin* with the index, deriving from it such pleasure as will stimulate eagerness to turn back to the text, perhaps piecemeal rather than as a continuous whole.' Other indexers similarly favour indexes that entice the reader into the text. Hazel Bell finds the entries in Douglas Matthews'

index to *The Frank Muir Book* 'make the user long to turn to the item indicated' (for example 'cauliflowers, pretentiousness of; nuns, forbidden beans; toothache, unhelpful music for'), as do the entries in the 1922 edition of *The Golden Bough*. And, she asks, who could refrain from turning to the pages cited in the index entry 'sex' in Julian Barnes's *Letters from London*. J.A. Vickers likewise enjoys an index that is 'a whetter of appetites and a stimulator of flagging interest', such as the unusual entries in an index of Ogden Nash's poems which 'may well send readers burrowing back into the main text'.

For A.S. Byatt, a good index blends 'order and chance, delight and usefulness'. It makes serendipitous discovery possible: 'It leads you to what you were trying to find, and also to what you needed, but did not know you needed to know.' For her, 'one of the greatest pleasures of reading indexes' lies in the 'exoticism of juxtaposition' brought about by the arbitrariness of the alphabetical order of the entries. And as a *reader* of indexes, she endorses the views of a friend of hers, a biographer, who obtains pleasure from the chronological guide to lives to be found in indexes and experiences 'unuseful irritation' when the biographical subheadings appear in alphabetical order—'beginning with "Aunt Amy's visit in 1865", not because it came early, but because it begins with "A".' (Elsewhere in the book, though, Hazel Bell warns that a rich chronological series of biographical subheadings may deprive the user 'of any sense of discovery or suspense' in the text itself, and gives as an example an index to Boswell's *London Journal* that lists every amorous twist and vernal turn in Boswell's affair with the actress, Mrs Louisa Lewis.

Indexers in fiction

The last quarter of the book consists of seventeen extracts showing how novelists have portrayed indexers and indexing in fiction. And what a portrayal it is. It is this section that indexers may find dismaying. For as Hazel Bell writes, the portrayal is 'distinctly patronizing' and 'not encouraging' to professional indexers. Take this line from a recent short story in *Good Housekeeping*: 'Indexing', comments the mother of Martin, a middle-aged

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indexer, is 'work about which I find it hard to summon up any interest. It's a dogged sort of job ...' So dogged, in the opinion of Archdeacon Echard, an eighteenth-century author, that he passed 'the Drudgery' of compiling an index to his *History of England*, 'to one who was thought not unfit for so low an Employment as giving an alphabetical Epitome' to the book. Even Gilbert White, the celebrated naturalist, approached the indexing of his *History of Selborne* as 'an occupation full as entertaining as that of darning stockings, though by no means so advantageous to society.'

With indexing likened to darning, it should come as no surprise that so many indexers in fiction are women: 'it's what wives are for' says a character in a Barbara Pym novel. 'One feels that anything to do with card indexes is more in a woman's line,' says another of her characters. And yet another opines that indexing is something one entrusts to 'excellent women whom one respects and esteems'. When not diffident and domestic, the female indexer inhabiting the pages of novels is often dotty and distracted — like Beatrice Nest in A.S. Byatt's *Possession*, with her desk piled high with 'a whole barbican of index boxes, thick with dust and scuffed with age, which she ruffled in interminably, talking to herself'.

Who would have guessed that card indexes could be so psychologically revealing, especially when used by men? (Are CINDEX, SKY Index and MACREX equally revealing of personality deficiencies?) P.D. James has one of her characters observe that the murdered man 'must have been a strange sort of chap. Funny. Methodical. That card index, for instance.'

And strange sorts of chaps are many of the other male indexers in fiction. 'We may picture him as eccentric, shabby, learned and normally drunk [though retaining] a magnificent and pedantic command of the English language' (as was said of Basil Jeeves, the indexer father of Jeeves, the classic butler). 'A meek man who drinks when he can get his hands on it ... He indexes learned tomes' is how another indexer was dismissively referred to in one of K. Giles's detective stories. Or he is depicted as obsessively indexerly in his personal life, 'fixated at one of the less attractive of Freud's psychosexual stages' (to quote Judy Batchelor), like the weak and ineffectual Martin (whom we met above), who sees his life as a series of headings and subheadings. He reflects on his failed marriage thus: 'Marriage: see under Humiliation. See also under Sex. Sex: see under Infrequency of; See also under Performance, inadequacy of. With stereotypes like these to contend with, is it any wonder that indexers' societies seek logos and letterheads to present a more assertive and sharp image of their members to the world?

For indexers who are not too dismayed by how they are depicted in fiction, this book is a wonderful pot-pourri that they (and all bibliophiles) will enjoy for its wry humour and its erudition. Like one of William Heckscher's ideal indexes, it can be read 'as if we were reading a good novel'; or, like a good box of chocolates, it can be enjoyably dipped into at whim. At £16, it is not cheap for Australian buyers, but if the cost is seen as equal to less than an hour's indexing at AusSI's current recommended rate, it is well worth the price.

From the Editor

We usually print the list of current members of AusSI in this issue but space did not permit. However, will do so in our August issue. Glenda Browne and Tricia Waters are representing AusSI at the SI Conference 'The Cotswold Wayzgoose', 16–18 July, in Cheltenham, UK, and we look forward to their reports. Trevor Matthews has given us an inviting and in-depth look at Hazel Bell's latest book, and Hazel Bell herself has generously sent information to complete our series 'Mining the archive' on the foundations and history of AusSI.

Very best,
Frances Paterson

Dates for your Diary (continued from page 68)

Aug 16–17

Australian Society of Archivists Annual Conference 2002. Details at <http://www.asa2002.records.nsw.gov.au>

Aug 21 & 22 Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills at ACER with Margaret Findlay and Max McMaster. Contact ph (03) 9835 7403, fax (03) 9835 7499 or email workshops@acer.edu.au

Aug 24 NSW Branch panel/workshops on indexing periodicals and biographies at LBC (Thomson), 100 Harris Street, Pyrmont. Contact Alan Walker at alan.walker@5054.aone.net.au

Society of Indexers in Australia progressed, 'Membership grew to approximately 100; meetings were held; newsletters were published; Australian members not only read *The Indexer* but wrote articles for it.' Josephine McGovern reported on 'Indexing in a State Parliamentary Library' (the Library of the Parliament of Victoria) in a talk given to the Society and reprinted in *The Indexer*, vol. 10, no. 2, October 1976.

'In September 1975, the whole scene changed. Godfrey Green found that changes in domestic circumstances deprived him of the time and opportunity to continue in office' (Garrow and Hagger, 1979). Jean Uhl volunteered to take his place and, at a meeting held in Melbourne on 4 December 1975, it was decided that an independent society should be inaugurated ('Annual Report of the Council for the year 1975-76', *The Indexer*, vol. 10, no. 2, October 1976, p. 83). 'On 27 April 1976, the last general meeting of the Society of Indexers in Australia, having approved the

termination of that organization's existence, became the inaugural meeting of the Australian Society of Indexers' (Garrow and Hagger, 1979). Negotiations began for the affiliation of the reconstituted Society with SI, and L. M. Harrod's Editorial for the October 1977 issue of *The Indexer* reported:

The revived group of indexers in Australia have ... agreed to the suggestion that they should be affiliated to the Society of Indexers ... We therefore give our Australian colleagues a very warm welcome into our family of indexers — as we did the members of the American Society of Indexers some years ago — and wish them every success in furthering their cause throughout the whole of their vast country.

The terms of affiliation appeared in that issue of *The Indexer*, followed by a report from their Secretary, Sylvia Ramsden, reading in part:

The Australian Society of Indexers ... has now been in existence for just over a year. We have a membership of 57 drawn mainly from Melbourne where we are based, but also have members in the Austra-

lian Capital Territory, Queensland and Tasmania [and presumably NSW — Ed.]. The average attendance at general meetings is 17.

We have held four general meetings plus an Annual General Meeting and have had guest speakers on a variety of indexing topics. We have begun publication of a Newsletter ... We are in the process of setting up a panel of experienced indexers with a view to starting a Register of Indexers ...

Although small in numbers our members are very enthusiastic and ideas are beginning to flow. We hope that as these are put into practice our membership will increase.

In New Zealand, meanwhile, Gerald Fowler, a microbiology technician from England, had immigrated to Wellington in 1967. When retirement loomed he sought a congenial second career, and became a freelance indexer, as SI's only member in New Zealand, and corresponding with SI members. He tried to found a New Zealand Indexing Group and newsletter, with the 'thirty or so indexers here', but this did not take off.

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Dates for your Diary

- Jul 18** Vic Branch General Meeting at ACER, 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell at 6.00 p.m. for 6.30 p.m. presents a talk on indexing online content using a metadata application profile. RSVP to Margaret Findlay, ACER, phone 03 9277 5549 or email findlay@acer.edu.au by 15 July
- Jul 30** Back-of-book indexing with Max McMaster at ACER, ph/fax 03 9500 8715 or email mindexer@interconnect.com.au
- Jul 31** Database/pictorial indexing with Max McMaster at ACER, ph/fax 03 9500 8715 or email mindexer@interconnect.com.au
- Aug 1** Journal indexing (half day) with Max McMaster at ACER, ph/fax 03 9500 8715 or email mindexer@interconnect.com.au
- Aug 13** Victorian Branch 'Walk into history on Collins Street'. Bookings to Jenny Restarick on ph/fax 03 9528 2539 or email jenny.restarick@sciro.au
- Aug 12 & 13** Cairns (Qld) Indexing books/databases and pictorial materials, with Max McMaster, see CAVAL details on Noticeboard
- Aug 15 & 16** Brisbane (Qld) Indexing books/databases and pictorial materials, with Max McMaster, see CAVAL details on Noticeboard

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From the literature

Glenda Browne

Online Currents vol. 17, issue 5, June 2002

Australian search engines

In 'Once there were Australian search engines ...' (pp. 1, 7-9), Liz Edols compares the results from two searches performed on a number of Australian search engines. One conclusion was that it is worth trying Australian search engines for Australian content, but that large search engines such as Google often have as much Australian content, along with more flexible search syntax.

Subject gateways and Google rankings

A summary (p. 34) of 'Subject gateway sites and search engine ranking' by Mike Thelwell, published in *Online Information Review* (vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 101-107) reports that the creation of subject gateways, which give access to web resources on specific topics, can lead to a lower ranking of those resources in Google as other sites tend to link to the gateway, rather than to the specific webpage. The article makes suggestions on how to increase findability of sites by PageRank (the software used by Google).

Although Google's ranking of sites based on the number of other sites which link to them is generally regarded as highly successful, this is not the only problem. It has also been found that newer sites are not likely to be ranked highly as people have not yet had a chance to discover them, and link to them. Google has, however, been working on a solution to this problem.

The overall success of Google is reflected by its first prize in both the industry and general public awards in its category of the recent Webby awards.

A to Z **The newsletter of STC's** **Indexing SIG Jan 2002**

Following a recent query to Index-L about online help indexing, Jan Wright suggested articles linked to from her site (www.wrightinformation.com/client.htm#articles&) and the newsletter of the US Society of Technical Communicators' Indexing SIG (www.stcsig.org/idx/newsltr.html). These newsletters are available in PDF format. Articles in the January 2002 issue include one on indexing user tasks (using gerunds such as 'naming') and one on creating a list of keywords for metadata creation using TermTree software (from This to That, an Australian company; www.termtree.com.au).

National Library of Australia

At the ALIA conference I picked up two publications about metadata and electronic information resources. 'Guidelines for the creation of content for resource discovery metadata' (also available at www.nla.gov.au/meta/metaguide.html) gives a brief introduction to metadata, then provides one page of assistance for the eight elements they consider to be most useful for resource discovery (title, creator, subject, description, publisher, date, identifier, coverage).

'Electronic information resources: strategies and action plan 2001-2002'

(also at www.nla.gov.au/policy/electronic/resourcesplan.html). The paper discusses the role of the NLA in collecting, preservation, access to electronic resources, and support for the sharing of electronic information resources. They suggest that search engines will provide more efficient Internet search capabilities, but that many information sites (in the 'deep web') will remain out of sight of search engines. They also predict that 'documents made available through the web will be better indexed, as search engines are made more meta-data-aware.'

XanEdu

At the ALIA conference I also collected a folder of information about XanEdu, a division of ProQuest Information and Learning (previously UMI and Bell and Howell Information and Learning). They provide copyright-cleared online materials for teachers and students. CoursePacks are available for specific subjects, or can be compiled as needed from the range of materials available on the site. The ReSearch Engine is a personal e-library with online access to journal articles, with navigation through topic trees that mirror the structure of the course.

I haven't seen the word 'indexing' in the documentation, but I'm sure it must be done. The MBAResearch Engine offers 20,000 predefined searches developed by experts in the field, and promises 'instant access to the latest information on a wide range of subject areas. More info at www.xanedu.com.

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