Indexing the World of Information: International Conference of the Australian Society of Indexers, Sydney, 12–13 September 2003 Conference Papers

Changes in *The Health and Ageing Thesaurus* and reindexing in Health*Insite*

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*This paper looks at the practical issues of aligning a database to updates of a thesaurus, with particular reference to the Health*Insite *database and the 6th edition of* The Health and Ageing Thesaurus*. With the 6th edition, some new terms were added to the thesaurus to enable better indexing in the areas of disease prevention and chronic disease. This affected over 20 per cent of the records in the Health*Insite *database and reindexing took some months. The costs and benefits of reindexing are discussed.*

To remain useful, a thesaurus must evolve with the terminology of its discipline. However a thesaurus does not usually exist on its own. It is a component of one or more information retrieval systems and so it is likely that development must also take into account the parameters of particular information retrieval systems—software capabilities, search mechanisms and indexing procedures.

Generally thesaurus changes are batched into regular updates (perhaps annual or biennial) to allow incremental but balanced evolution. Occasionally niggling concerns raised by database indexers or searchers will come to a head and require significant changes to the thesaurus.

Thesaurus changes will in turn have implications for the databases. When a thesaurus changes, database managers must decide whether to reindex the affected older records in the database or rely on searchers adjusting their searches to match the terminology of the period they are searching. Generally larger databases would not be reindexed because of the cost. For smaller databases reindexing might be feasible—and it may be more necessary because the inconsistencies between old and new indexing may be more obvious. (Libraries have to make a similar decision—whether or not to reshelve collections—when there are changes to the shelf classification scheme.)

In the case of *The Health and Ageing Thesaurus*[1], a very significant change occurred with the latest edition. The scope of the term 'prevention and control' was narrowed to public health aspects only. Three new terms were introduced ('living with disease', 'primary prevention' and 'prophylaxis') and the scope of the term 'disease management' was widened to cover some areas where 'prevention and control' might have been used in the past.

Now, while Health*Insite*[2] staff were the main instigators of this change, the effect was that over 20 per cent of the records in our database had to be reviewed. Why didn't we let sleeping dogs lie?!

What's inside

GPO Box 2069, Canberra ACT 2601

Notice

ACT Branch web-indexing course

The ACT Region Branch is planning to hold a day-long web-indexing course on Saturday 6 December at the IT Training Laboratory, Coombs Building, ANU, from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. including an hour lunch break. It will be conducted by Glenda Browne and will cover an introduction to information access on the Web, requirements and software for book-style indexes, HTML Indexer demonstration and exercises, and discussion. The cost will be $175 for AusSI members and members of the Society of Editors, and $200 for non-members. Flyers will be sent out to ACT members at a later date.

AusSI Indexing Medal

AusSI is again offering its annual Medal for the most outstanding index to a book or periodical compiled in Australia or New Zealand. The Medal will be presented to the indexer responsible for the best work submitted and the publisher will be presented with a certificate.

To be eligible for the award, the index must be in print and must have been first published after 2000. It must have been compiled in Australia or New Zealand even though the text to which it refers may have originated elsewhere.

For the award, indexes are judged at the level of outstanding professional achievement—thus sufficient material is required, both in quality and quantity, for appraisal. The index should be substantial in size, the subject matter should be complex, and the language, form and structure of the index should demonstrate the indexer's expertise as well as serving the needs of the text and the reader.

Publishers, indexers and all interested persons are invited to nominate indexes which meet the above criteria, and which they regard as worthy of consideration. Indexers are encouraged to nominate their own works.

Please send recommendations, with bibliographic details, together with a copy of the book (which will be returned if requested) to:
John Simkin
Australian Society of Indexers Medal Competition
PO Box 680
Belgrave, Victoria, 3160
as soon as possible but no later than Monday 29 December 2003.

For further information, please contact John Simkin on the above address or by email:
`simmo27au@yahoo.com.au`

ACT Branch Annual Report Indexing Meeting

On Saturday 25 October a group of eight indexers and editors met for an informal discussion on issues relating to indexing governmental annual reports.

One of the major problems is the difficulty of scheduling, because of delays in preparing the annual reports, and even though the department has booked the indexer, they may not produce the index at all. The coordinators position is not a high level one, resulting in indexers having to work with different coordinators each year, mostly from the corporate section of the agency, who have little or no knowledge of publishing procedures. There may be great inconsistencies in terminology, changes to text may occur after the indexing has commenced, or even after completion!

More nuts and bolts issues were whether indexers should alert editors to editing errors, whether pdf files are useful, and how to be assertive when quoting.

Whether the Australian Society of Indexers had an entrepreneurial role, was also discussed. Some suggestions were to flag indexers available to index annual reports on the web site and to prepare a checklist of indexing points for distribution at the Annual Report seminar for coordinators, held each year in June.

Geraldine Triffitt

NSW Branch Christmas Lunch

Wednesday, 3 December, 12 noon, at Hennessy's on Harris, 46 Harris Street, Pyrmont, Ph 02 9660 0332

Bus: 443 bus from Queen Victoria Building; Light Rail: alight at John Street tram station

There will be a committee meeting of the NSW Branch at the cafe at 11 a.m.

board

Victorian Branch Christmas Celebration

Tuesday 9 December 2003 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. dinner, King & I Thai Restaurant, 613 Whitehorse Road, Mont Albert, near the Whitehorse and Union Roads intersection. Parking is available in Union Road or behind the Whitehorse Road shops. The 109 tram passes outside the front door. Enter the restaurant and go upstairs.

Regular or Vegetarian Banquet Menu $25 per head. The Society of Indexers will provide alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages as a Christmas bonus to all attendees.

RSVP to Ann Philpott on 03 9830 0494 or email her on annp@mydesk.net.au by Friday 5 December, and state whether you desire the regular or vegetarian menu. Please bring cash on the night, not cheques or credit cards, and pay the Treasurer when you arrive.

Society of Editors (NSW) Xmas Party

Tuesday 2 December, 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. at Nags Head Hotel, 162 St John's Road, Glebe (cnr Lodge Road). $45 (including drinks). It's our Xmas Party—and not just any old party—this is a fantastic chance for meeting, eating, drinking and pitting your wits. This year we're having a Xmas party with more action—a Trivia night to be exact. Alongside eating, meeting, comes … competing. RSVP with payment by 21 November to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007.

ALIA 2004

The Australian Library and Information Association is pleased to announce the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference.

The theme for the conference is Challenging Ideas … about yourself, about the profession, about the services we provide, about the leadership we need and our culture and traditions.

Guaranteed to be different—meet the challenge at the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference!

To find out more information, please visit http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2004/

Search Engine Strategies Conference and Expo

This conference and expo takes place in Chicago, Illinois, 9–11 December 2003. The focus of presentations and panels is on search engine-related promotion with an emphasis on interaction between search engines and websites and how to improve website result listings.

For information and registration, email registration@jupitermedia.com

CAL Forums and Seminars

We invite you to register for information seminars and interactive forums on the following dates:

Melbourne: Thursday, 27 November
Sydney: Friday, 28 November

The seminars commence at 8.30 a.m. and will cover CAL's performance for the year; new developments in the digital arena and new directions for CAL. More information is available on our website.

After the seminar, we encourage you to participate in a forum on possible changes to the way we manage our distributions to members. We want to hear what you have to say.

To register, email your contact details to:
seminars@copyright.com.au
(or phone 02 9394 7600 and ask for Membership).
Copyright Agency Limited
www.copyright.com.au

Online Information 2003

Conference takes place in London, UK, 2–4 December 2003. Themes include content and information management, collaboration issues and the future of digital libraries. Information at www.online-information.co.uk/online

Law via the Internet Conference

Hosted by the Australasian Legal Information Institute, the fifth conference will be held 26–28 November 2003 at UTS, Sydney, and UNSW. An international meeting of legal information institutes will take place on Wednesday 26 November as will tutorials on Internet legal research. Further information at www.austlii.edu.au/austlii/conference/

Classification and indexing

Report on panel discussion held 7 October 2003

On Tuesday, 7 October 2003, the Victorian Branch of AusSI held a panel discussion on 'Classification and Indexing' with guest speakers Susan Liepa, Max McMaster and Fiona Mottram. The meeting was held at the ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) building, in Camberwell. The event attracted a large audience, and it was good to see some new faces in the crowd. After drinks and nibbles and a chance to chat, we enjoyed three quite different presentations from the panellists.

Stimulating library circulation

The first speaker, Susan Liepa, addressed the topic 'Indexing to stimulate library circulation'. During more than twenty-five years of working with technology in libraries, Susan has developed extensive experience in the planning, project management and implementation of library database mergers and loads, library networks and associated library management systems. For most of the last twenty years Susan has operated her own consultancy and project management business focusing predominantly on Victorian public libraries.

Susan's presentation drew on her experiences as Library Management System Project Manager for the merger of the Vision Australia Library and the National Information Library. In this role, Susan oversaw the planning, coordination and specification of the merger of the data from the joint RBS (Royal Blind Society) / RVIB (Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind) and the data of the Vision Australia Library into a combined database to be managed by a single Library Management System.

It was fascinating to learn of the challenges involved in providing library services to meet the needs of the visually impaired. Since the clients cannot browse through the catalogue, the library needs to be able to select material to match client preferences. In order to do this, all material stored by the library must be indexed to an extremely high degree of specificity to take account of different types of format (for example, audio, CD, Braille,

and so forth) and content. Combining the databases of two such libraries—each having been developed for different purposes and with different client bases, and each having followed different approaches to the classification of material and having indexed to different degrees of specificity—was clearly a massive undertaking. Distinguishing between numerous formats (such as fifteen different types of Braille) was the easy part. Dealing with issues such as consistency, given the subjectivity involved in classifying certain aspects of content (such as sex, violence, or offensive language), presented far greater challenges. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the merged database went 'live' for all circulation and searching activities as scheduled on 1 July this year.

The unconventional index

Max McMaster was next to take the floor, and spoke on the topic 'The unconventional index: breaking the basic principles of indexing'. Max has been a freelance indexer for the past ten years working predominantly on back-of-book indexing, but delving into database indexing, journal indexing and web-indexing as well. He arrived at indexing after spending nineteen years in the library and information fields, mainly involved with scientific disciplines in State government departments and CSIRO. He has in excess of 1000 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, CAVAL and others all around Australia and New Zealand. Max has been awarded the Australian Society of Indexers Medal on three occasions.

In direct contrast to Susan's talk, which had focused on the need for a high degree of specificity in indexing, Max's presentation demonstrated the need for a *classified* index in certain circumstances. For a number of years, Max has been responsible for compiling the index to the *QTAC Guide*, the handbook produced each year by the

Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre. This handbook outlines enrolment procedures for intending students and provides details of all tertiary courses on offer. In earlier years, Max has produced indexes for this hefty volume using specific entries. Each year, however, there were complaints about the usability of the index. The format was not working. A key problem for students was that they could not search for what they didn't already know, for example, a course offering 'infomechatronics'.

To solve the problem, and improve the usability of the index, it was necessary to 'break the basic principles of indexing'. Max largely abandoned specific entry and compiled a classified index. In fact, he compiled three indexes: a general index covering application details, etc.; a subject index; and a cross reference index. For the subject index, approximately thirty categories were devised into which all the various disciplines could be classified. In the cross reference index, each discipline or course (for example, infomechatronics) was cross referenced to a subject area (in this case, Engineering) as listed in the subject index. Members of the audience tested out the system, asking Max to look up particular terms in the cross reference and subject indexes. Despite these efforts to find a flaw, Max's system held up under scrutiny. It will be interesting to find out what this year's approximately 80,000 users of the *QTAC Guide* have to say about the usability of the index.

Sydney conference

Our final speaker for the evening was Fiona Mottram, who spoke about her impressions, as a new indexer, of the Sydney conference, 'Indexing the World of Information', 12–13 September 2003. Fiona is currently the Secretary of the Victorian Branch of AusSI. She was a town planner and then librarian before starting up as a freelance indexer in November 2002 with assistance from the federal government's NEIS (New Enterprise Incentive Scheme) program. Her first index was done voluntarily for the Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia.

She is currently indexing the quarterly magazine *Donkey Dispatch*, published by the Donkey Society of New Zealand. At present, Fiona is a participant in the pilot mentoring program being run by AusSI Vic.

AusSI's National Branch sponsored Fiona to attend the Sydney conference. Never having attended any type of conference, and currently leading a rural existence raising donkeys on her farm in South Gippsland, Fiona confessed to being quite excited by the novelty of staying in hotel accommodation, riding in lifts, and seeing men in suits. She made a number of positive observations and constructive criticisms about the organisation of the conference. In particular, she was impressed by the chocolates used as advertising, but was surprised by the relatively low-key marketing of AusSI at the conference venue. At the sessions she attended, Fiona found the papers interesting and informative, including those she'd initially thought she would not understand. She also appreciated the opportunity to meet and talk with other indexers.

Most important, perhaps, was that Fiona felt that her own identity as an indexer was confirmed and bolstered as a result of her attendance at the conference. Full of new-found confidence and enthusiasm, she recounted how she'd felt she couldn't wait to leave Sydney and get home to do some indexing. Fiona strongly recommended that other new indexers make the effort to attend a conference. Noting her own initial trepidation, and that her fears had not been realised, she encouraged other new indexers to be confident and not to feel intimidated regardless of their age or background. Indeed, she urged us all to be proud of our skills as indexers, and to 'feel good' about our need to create order out of chaos.

At the conclusion of the meeting a number of people stayed on to join the panellists at a nearby restaurant for dinner. The rest, no doubt rushed home to do some indexing or to reorganise their kitchen cupboards.

Karen Gillen

Relationship between Health*Insite* and *The Health and Ageing Thesaurus*

Health*Insite* is a gateway website managed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It links to over 10,000 Australian health resources on the sites of our 65 information partner organisations. Each resource has a metadata record in the Health*Insite* database. The most important metadata element is the subject element which utilises *The Health and Ageing Thesaurus*.

The Health and Ageing Thesaurus is managed by the Library of the Department of Health and Ageing. It is now in its 6th edition. It is based on MeSH[3], with a similar hierarchical structure but far fewer preferred terms. The Thesaurus does not include history notes, although lists of new, changed and deleted terms appear in the introduction to each edition.

*Health*Insite *is a gateway website [which] links to over 10,000 Australian health resources on the sites of our 65 information partner organisations.*

Some features of how Health*Insite* uses the Thesaurus are:
- ❑ Indexing depth is somewhat greater than in cataloguing—most records have 5–10 thesaurus terms.
- ❑ Indexing is as specific as possible.
- ❑ 'Subheading' terms are used but they are free floating. This leads to a loss of precision—for example, if a resource has the indexing terms 'pneumonia', 'pain' and 'therapy' then you cannot be sure if it is about therapy for pneumonia or therapy for pain or both.

- ❑ There is no weighting of terms.
- ❑ The thesaurus hierarchy numbers are built into the database so that they can be used in searching.
- ❑ The browsing structure in Health*Insite* consists of a range of topics arranged in a hierarchy and also accessible from a topics list. Topics range from broad (for example, 'Conditions/Diseases') to narrow (for example, 'Respiratory conditions in childhood'). Most topic pages have a dynamic search embedded within them, so that users see the latest list of resources relevant to the topic. These searches rely heavily on the thesaurus terms used in the metadata.

The thesaurus term 'prevention and control'

When indexing a resource about a disease, indexers routinely consider a set of possible 'subheading' terms from the thesaurus (such as 'causes', 'symptoms', 'therapy', 'prevention and control'). Most of these terms were adopted from the MeSH list of subheadings. However, as noted above, they are free floating terms in Health*Insite*. The MeSH definition of 'prevention and control' is:

> Used with disease headings for increasing human or animal resistance against disease (e.g., immunization), for control of transmission agents, for prevention and control of environmental hazards, or for prevention and control of social factors leading to disease. It includes preventive measures in individual cases.

In practice, it was a very easy term to use in Health*Insite*—and to overuse. We used it for how an individual could avoid a disease as well as the public health procedures in controlling a disease. We also used it for the individual control of a disease in the sense of preventing complications or preventing flare-ups of a chronic disease.

This broad use had been of concern for some time because of recall/precision problems with some topic queries. However it was a user feedback query which persuaded us to finally take action. The user wanted to find some information on preventing breast cancer but was overwhelmed by resources about mammograms. Now mass screening with mammograms is an important public health measure to control breast cancer through early diagnosis and prompt treatment. It is a preventive measure at the population level, but at the individual level it is about diagnosis, not about how to prevent the disease. We realised that our indexing did not enable us to separate resources about primary prevention (likely to be of particular interest to consumers) from those about public health measures. We also had a problem with chronic diseases like asthma, where preventing an asthmatic person from having an asthma attack is quite different from preventing asthma in the first place.

*The Health*Insite *database is relatively small and our usual practice has been to reindex the database to match thesaurus changes.*

Since consumers are a key target for Health*Insite*, we recommended some thesaurus changes which were adopted. The Health*Insite* database is relatively small and our usual practice has been to reindex the database to match thesaurus changes. One reason for doing this in a web gateway is that the resources themselves are being frequently updated and metadata upgrading needs to be part of resource maintenance. In addition there are usability issues for both users and content managers. For example, when indexing a particular concept, it is useful for indexers to be able to check the database to see how that concept has been indexed before—it is confusing if the database is inconsistent. There are also software reasons for reindexing. For example, in the Health*Insite* metadata creation tool, the validation program for subject terms is unable to cater for multiple versions of the thesaurus. The downside of reindexing is the time required. In the case of 'prevention and control' this was likely to be substantial because a large proportion of the

Table 1. Reindexing decision made on the use of 'prevention and control' (P&C) in a record

Reindexing decision	Number of records	%
No change (ie meets new definition of P&C)	433	20.5
Changed to Primary Prevention	643	30.4
Changed to Prophylaxis	160	7.5
Changed to Disease Management, Living with Disease or another therapy term	177	8.4
Changed to another term not listed above	39	1.8
Deleted	661	31.3
Total	2113	

Health*Insite* database (over 20 per cent) was affected.

Reindexing process

Below are the new terms introduced into the thesaurus (with scope notes) and the revised scope notes for disease management and prevention and control:

Living with disease: Covers social, psychological, physical, and lifestyle issues. Add name of specific disease

Primary prevention: Prevention of disease in susceptible individuals through promotion of health, including mental health, and specific protection, as in immunisation, as distinguished from the prevention of complications or after-effects of existing disease (that is Disease management)

Prophylaxis: The administration of a drug or therapy to prevent disease

Disease management: Use as an additional heading for the management of chronic disease and the prevention of flare-ups and/or complications

Prevention and control: Use for the public health aspects of prevention and control of particular diseases. Covers the activities associated with developing control mechanisms, national responses and procedures to prevent the occurrence of outbreak of diseases

The review was done over a period of ten weeks. Preliminary guidelines for reindexing were defined and a supplement was prepared after the first batch of reindexing. The reindexing was done by two members of the Health*Insite* Editorial Team, consulting with the rest of the team as needed. For example, we sometimes needed to discuss the effects of reindexing on search strategies.

The crucial guideline when considering a resource was: is this about someone who has a disease? (in which case treatment/management terms are needed) or is it about someone who does not have the disease? (in which case the prevention terms are appropriate).

> *The crucial guideline when considering a resource was: is this about someone who has a disease?*

We found that the resource had to be checked again as well as the metadata record in about half the cases. Often it was necessary to check all the indexing terms, not just 'prevention and control'. The most difficult cases were the complex disease processes, such as the lead-up to stroke or heart attacks (with risk factors like high cholesterol, high blood pressure and atherosclerosis). In some cases the therapy was the same as the prevention method—for example, a high fibre diet for constipation—and we had to decide whether the resource focus was prevention or therapy. Of course many resources are about both prevention and therapy and both aspects can be covered in indexing. A third area of difficulty was the prevention of infectious diseases, where the main process of control at the population health level is also primary prevention at the individual level—for example, washing your hands before preparing food. We worked out some guidelines so that only a small proportion of records were indexed as both 'primary prevention' and 'prevention and control'.

We did not keep a record of the time taken for this project. The review and reindexing was often done in small batches between other jobs. Sometimes slow system speeds held us up. We estimate that the task took between 3 and 6 minutes for each record, with a total time of over 100 hours and maybe as much as 150 hours.

> *One of the principles of thesaurus development is to provide a balance with respect to the key databases for which it is used.*

Results

The number of records checked was 2277. Of these, 164 were not included in the analysis—reasons for non-inclusion were 404 errors, records being flagged for removal, topic pages being deferred till later and miscellaneous queries. See Table 1.

Discussion

One of the principles of thesaurus development is to provide a balance with respect to the key databases for which it is used. This means not getting too specific in areas where there are likely to be few relevant resources in the databases and also trying to split terms that are retrieving far too many results in a database search. It was good to see high numbers of records for

both 'prevention and control' with its new definition and 'primary prevention'—this indicated that it was worthwhile to make the distinction. 'Prophylaxis' was well used. 'Disease management' was less well used—however both 'disease management' and 'living with disease' will get more usage when other areas of the database are reviewed.

At one stage we thought of the thesaurus as a cut-down version of MeSH with an Australian slant.

The biggest surprise was the percentage of records where 'prevention and control' was simply deleted. In many cases the resource was about preventing complications of a disease and we had decided to index this as 'complications' without any prevention term. In other cases a therapy term or a more specific prevention term (for example, 'immunisation') was more appropriate and was already in the record. In a lot of cases, the resource was not really about prevention at all and it was a puzzle that it was indexed as such.

The reason lies in the indexing procedure noted earlier: when indexing a resource about a disease, indexers routinely consider a set of possible 'subheading' terms and quickly check them off, for example: causes—yes, symptoms—yes, diagnosis—no, therapy—no, prevention and control—yes. Sometimes you fail to register that there are only a couple of sentences about prevention and that the main focus of the resource is one of the other terms. Furthermore, when a resource is about chronic disease—about controlling symptoms or being in control of the disease—it is easy to bend the definition and think that maybe 'prevention and control' is a suitable term.

Given that we had been aware of problems with 'prevention and control' for years, it is of some regret to us that we did not make changes to the thesaurus much earlier. One of the reasons was a reluctance to keep moving away from MeSH with each edition of the thesaurus. At one stage we thought of the thesaurus as a cut-down version of MeSH with an Australian slant—and hoped that it could be incorporated into the UMLS[4] (a medical meta-thesaurus). Development of the thesaurus is now tending to give precedence to the needs of our own databases.

(It should be noted that, when MeSH is used in Medline, the indexing process and the search software provided in many versions of Medline allow for much higher recall and precision than we can achieve in Health*Insite*. The problems that we have had with 'prevention and control' might not occur.)

Now that the reindexing has been done, it will be possible to review the Health*Insite* topic pages relating to disease prevention. Depending on the number of resources retrieved by topic queries, there will be some diseases where separating the different aspects of prevention will be very useful. Tightening our indexing procedure so that 'subheading ' terms are considered more carefully, rather than ticking off all that seem to apply, will make topic results more precise.

We are hoping to develop a search application which will make the complete thesaurus available to users.

We are hoping to develop a search application which will make the complete thesaurus available to users and guide them in constructing a search, using thesaurus terms and hierarchies. The reindexing will mean that a user with a query like 'How can I avoid getting Disease X' could be given a much better search result.

Conclusion

This project showed that the thesaurus changes in the 'prevention' terms enabled a useful partitioning of the Health*Insite* database where the term 'prevention and control' had previously been overused and sometimes incorrectly used. The real benefits will show as the Health*Insite* topic pages are reviewed and more precise searching is possible in the area of disease prevention. Further benefits will come as we develop the search functionality of Health*Insite* to allow guided thesaurus searches.

We feel that the benefits of reindexing justify the costs (estimated at 100–150 hours work). The situation would have continued to worsen without the thesaurus changes and without reindexing.

What are the implications for other database indexers and managers? Firstly, it is important to keep a whole system perspective. Indexers should never regard themselves as 'merely the indexer'—their alerts that particular concepts are hard to index with the thesaurus, or that thesaurus terms are not well-defined, are vital for both database managers and thesaurus developers. Secondly, database maintenance to match thesaurus changes can be expensive. Database managers need to weigh the costs against the benefits of having consistent indexing.

Acknowledgements

References

1 *The Health and Ageing Thesaurus*, 6th edn, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. 2003 `www.health.gov.au/thesaurus.htm`

2 Health*Insite* `www.healthinsite.gov.au`

3 *MeSH: Medical Subject Headings*, US National Library of Medicine `www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh`

4 *UMLS: Unified Medical Language System* `www.nlm.nih.gov/research/umls`

D a t e s for your D i a r y

Nov 26–28

Law via the Internet Conference hosted by Austlii at UTS and UNSW.
www.austlii.edu.au/austlii/conference/

Nov 27 & 28

CAL Forums and Seminars—see Noticeboard for details

Dec 2   Society of Editors (NSW) Xmas Party and Trivia Quiz. RSVP by 21 November. See Noticeboard for details.

Dec 3   NSW Branch Xmas lunch at Hennessy's on Harris, 46 Harris Street, Pyrmont, 12 noon, with pre-lunch committee meeting at 11 a.m.

Dec 6   ACT Branch web-indexing course with Glenda Browne at the IT Training Laboratory, Coombs Building ANU. See Noticeboard for details.

Dec 9   Vic Branch Christmas Celebration, 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. dinner, King & I Thai Restaurant, 613 Whitehorse Road, Mont Albert, near the Whitehorse and Union Roads intersection. Parking is available in Union Road or behind the Whitehorse Road shops.

Dec 29   Deadline for AusSI Indexing Medal. See Noticeboard for details.

From the literature

Glenda Browne

australianit.news.com.au

Two rather different technological developments have been announced this week. The first is the creation of 'electronic paper' that may (*may* is the operative word) one day enable books and newspapers to show full-colour movies (25 September 2003). This is a development of the Philips electronic paper mentioned at the AusSI Canberra conference in 2001, but involves dots divided into three compartments, containing cyan, magenta or yellow oils. The compartments can be switched independently and can display a variety of colours. If technical challenges can be overcome, the first use will probably be in mobile phones or handheld organisers since a power source is needed.

The second development is the discovery that sea sponges contain optic fibres that are stronger than the optic fibres currently used in telecommunications as they are covered with an organic sheath (30 September 2003). They are also made at much lower temperatures, which could bring manufacturing costs down. The trouble is, with fibres measuring about 15 cm long, it'll take a large number of sponges to span the oceans. (Speaking of optic fibres, we have a stone called *ulexite*, bought at the Australian Museum shop for $10, which also contains optic fibres. Any image under the rock is transmitted to the top of the rock. It's rather amazing).

www.oclc.org

In the March 2002 issue of this *Newsletter* I wrote about the Biblio-Hotel (now apparently known as The Library Hotel) in New York, in which bedrooms are classified according to the Dewey Classification number of the books they contain. Love and sex are popular choices—I'm not sure whether you can select rooms with literature on petrology or organisational behaviour or other less romantic options.

OCLC is now taking legal action against the hotel for trademark infringement: www.oclc.org/news/announceents/announcement40.htm

Apparently repeated requests for attribution of ownership by OCLC of Dewey trademarks were refused by the hotel.

... the word
Newsletter of the Society of Editors (SA)
September–October 2003

The Accreditation Working Group Draft Report (pp.10–16) provides an excellent framework for a fair, transparent, appropriate, inclusive, consistent, flexible, acceptable, practical, sustainable and accountable accreditation scheme (these are the CASE (national body of editors) requirements). They feel that accreditation should take into account the education and training available in editing, but should also include editors without formal qualifications who can demonstrate competence through other avenues. Compliance should not be onerous, and the scheme must be based on the Australian Standards for Editing Practice

The model uses a points-based system, with points allocated for the following achievements:

❏ Qualifications (e.g. 3 points for a certificate IV; max. 40 points)
❏ Experience (5 points for each year of full-time editing; max. 40 points)
❏ Portfolio (20 points for full competence and 10 points for competence against each of the 5 standards; max. 100 points)
❏ Testimonials (2 points each; max. 20 points)
❏ Professional participation (e.g. 5 points each for presenting courses, presenting papers, and committee membership; max. 20 points)

Administration would be by an Accreditation Board appointed by CASE; there would be a paid administrator. Applicants who score 150 points (which must include a portfolio) will be invited to be assessors. Applicants will be able to veto up to three assessors, and may request a specialist editor. They envisage a fee of $200 for a five-year accreditation period, with perhaps a discount in the first year to get the scheme established.

Complaints against accredited editors will be reviewed by the Accreditation Board. If the Board decides there has been a breach of editing standards, the editor may be asked to forfeit their accreditation status until they submit further evidence of competence.

Renewal for another five years will be granted to editors who are full members of a society of editors, have stayed employed as an editor, and have accumulated another 20 points, 10 points of which must be earned from professional development activities.

At this stage a proposal has been made that CASE establishes an accreditation scheme based on these recommendations, following consultation with and decision by all its members.

The draft report was presented to the National Conference of Editors in Brisbane (17–20 July 2003) and the full draft report can be downloaded from the Society of Editors (SA)

website at `www.editors-sa.org.au/case.htm`

Archie McPhee

Archie McPhee `www.mcphee.com/amusements/current/11247.html` have launched their librarian action figure, based on real-life Seattle librarian Nancy Pearl. If you press the button on her back her arm moves with a 'shushing action'. Responses range from delight at the newfound prominence of librarians in popular culture to dismay at the stereotypical portrayal.

The blurb is quite positive, saying 'Although most librarians can't travel faster than a speeding bullet, or leap over tall buildings in a single bound, they can direct you to an article on the physics of speed, an instructional pamphlet on high jumping, and a book of photographs of the world's tallest buildings.'

The doll comes with a plastic replica of Nancy Pearl's latest book, *Book Lust*, and a stack of books which from the picture seems to include *Bulgarian Flax* and *Devil's Dictionary*. Cost is US$8.95.

CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin Online

The CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin `www.caut.ca/english/bulletin/2003_oct/news/sciencepub.asp` reports that the US Treasury Department has told the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) it must stop editing scholarly papers submitted by researchers living in countries under a US trade embargo as this is equivalent to providing a service to those authors. They can apply for a special licence to keep editing. This applies to countries such as Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Sudan.

Amazon.com Search Inside the Book

The Amazon.com Search Inside the Book feature `www.amazon.com` allows users to search for words in the title and text of books on its system. Results are shown with the search words highlighted in the text. A search for 'book indexing' retrieves the texts by Mulvany and Bonura (but Wellisch is not in the top 20), as well as books with text such as '... this book ... would like to thank Nancy Guenther for the index ...'

Editor/s Wanted

December will be the last issue edited by me and laid out by Michael Wyatt. We have had a lot of fun with the Newsletter—Michael is now moving on to new things and the Newsletter does need a designer. Moreover, NSW Branch has been editing the Newsletter for seven years: Dwight Walker for one, Glenda Browne for three, and myself and Michael for three. Because the National Executive is now with the ACT Branch we are looking to ACT Branch members to take it up.

What's involved?

It does require some time but it isn't too onerous, especially if a small number of people contribute. Most of the content for the 2004 issues (there are 11 a year, with January/February a combined issue) can come from publishing the 2003 conference papers. There are the regular sections such as 'Noticeboard', 'Dates from your diary', and 'From the editor'. The Branch News reports and notices come in from branch secretaries and contributors almost every month; and sometimes we're lucky to have regular contributors such as Glenda Browne's 'From the literature'. We've also just started a 'Q&A' column and if you keep the questions and answers coming in, this will be a really useful forum for all members.

The editor is free to introduce their own ideas into the format and content; and there is a new one-colour plus b&w masthead and layout for the newsletter ready to be introduced with the January/February 2004 issue.

Please contact `newsletter@aussi.org` to make further enquiries.

Best wishes,
Frances Paterson

Newsletter, Webmaster and Registration contacts

National and Branch Committee contacts