

SOCIETY OF INDEXERS IN AUSTRALIA

All correspondence regarding The Society of Indexers (England), The Society of Indexers in Australia and the *Newsletter* should be addressed to H. Godfrey Green, 35 Rosedale Road, Glen Iris, Victoria 3146.

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Absente auxilio perquirimus undique frustra,

Sed nobis ingene indicis auxilium est.

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER FOUR

FREE TO MEMBERS

DECEMBER 1973

NEXT MEETING

AN UNUSAL indexing assignment for a Melbourne publisher and the work of indexing historic criminal records will be described by Mrs Jean Uhl at the next meeting of the Society on Wednesday, 5 December, at 8 p.m. at 1 Gwenda Avenue, Blackburn.

This follows the interesting and informative description by Mr Douglas Bishop of his work of indexing the early Victorian shipping records and the migrants these ships brought to our shores.

The full text of his talk is given as a supplement to this *Newsletter*.

You are cordially invited to come and bring a guest to the December meeting; please note the date.

MEMBERSHIP IS GROWING

The list of members still continues to grow. This month we welcome Mrs Anne C. Batt, cataloguer for the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education in Hobart, Tasmania; Mrs Joan P. Morrison, librarian for the Engineering Library of the University of Sydney; Miss Lois J. Davey, librarian for the Botany Library of the University of Melbourne; Miss Jean Hagger, head of the Department of Librarianship for the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology; Mrs Vera Wicks, librarian for St. Hilda's College, Parkville; and M/s Winifred Wilkins, librarian, also of Victoria.

You are again reminded that the Newsletter now accepts papers in addition to those presented at the Society's meetings.

They should be of a practical nature and of some relevance to problems encountered in book indexing.

Other kinds of contributions which will be considered for inclusion are short notes on new techniques or systems of indexing, comment on papers appearing in previous issues of the Newsletter, and personal paragraphs of interest to indexers.

References to indexes in book reviews are also wanted.

Contributions, which should be typewritten double-spaced, single-sided, and not more than 1000 words, should be addressed to The Editor, S.I.A. Newsletter, 35 Rosedale Road, Glen Iris, Victoria 3146.

FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD BE RECEIVED NOT LATER THAN 14 JANUARY 1974.

REVIEWERS' BRICKS AND (OCCASIONAL) BOUQUETS

The Society is indebted to Mrs Jean Uhl for these references. More will be given in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

Reference to LAND, LABOUR AND GOLD by William Howitt: Historical Reprint Series, Lowden Publishing Co. and LAND, LABOUR AND GOLD by William Howitt: Facsimile edition, Sydney University Press.

..... the indexes which have been added to both volumes differ considerably. The Lowden volume has 31 pages against the 8 of the Sydney volume..

The BENDIGO TRAMWAYS: An Illustrated History by K.S. Kings. Published by the Australian Railway Historical Society in conjunction with the Australian Electric Traction Association.

The book is an awkward shape, well written and illustrated ... there is no index - otherwise an interesting book.

FRONTIER TERRITORY: The Colourful Story of the Pioneering of North Australia by Glenville Pike. Published privately.

... it has a bibliography but no index which, due to the nature of the book, would have been a great help.

COBB AND CO by J.E.L. Rutherford, published privately by the author.

... it is therefore somewhat regretfully that we must mention that the book has no index, no detailed documentation and no bibliography ...

AUSTRALIAN SHIPWRECKS by Charles Bateson. Vol 1. A.H. & A.W. Reed.

... the index is more than copious. First is an index of ships, an index of localities, an index of persons, this being broken into masters, owners, and ship-builders

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To Members in Victoria

FILL IN AND RETURN THIS SLIP ON OR BEFORE 28 NOVEMBER, 1973

Mr. H. Godfrey Green,
35 Rosedale Road,
GLEN IRIS, VIC. 3146

will*

I will not* be attending the meeting of the Society of Indexers in Australia on 5 December, 1973.

will*

I will not* be bringing a guest to this meeting.

(signed)

* Strike word(s) which are not applicable.

INDEXING VICTORIAN SHIPPING RECORDS

Full text of talk to the Society of Indexers in Australia by Mr Douglas Bishop on 25 October 1973.

THE indexing project about which I will be speaking this evening, is quite different from those mentioned at previous meetings which I have attended, it being the indexing of a group of records, rather than a book or periodical.

I work for the Public Record Office of Victoria which was established earlier this year by an Act of Parliament, as a branch of the Chief Secretary's Office and which embodies the former Archives Division of the State Library of Victoria. The Public Record Office (P.R.O.), is given oversight of the preservation of the records made by the Government of Victoria, and its agencies, as defined in the Act, part of its duties including the housing of those records which are to be retained, but which, for one reason or another, are not needed in the creating office.

Large quantities of such records have been received since the 1890's, by the P.R.O. and its antecedents, the holdings currently amounting to about eleven miles of shelved files and registers, plus tens of thousands of plans, microfilm, etc.

Among the many problems attendant upon the preservation and use of the records, are two which, in conjunction with a high and growing enquiry rate, were instrumental in the undertaking of this indexing project. These are firstly a lack of adequate finding aids, including indexes, to the records on the accession from the transferring department and secondly, the current use of the records for purposes for which they were not created.

THE class of records on which this project is being undertaken comprises the shipping, or immigrant records of the former Victorian Department of Trade and Customs and of its predecessor in the administration of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, plus a few very minor groups which will be listed later. For administrative purposes, these groups are considered as one class.

The period covered is from 1839, when an assisted immigrant scheme commenced bringing people from the United Kingdom to the Port Phillip District, to the end of 1923 when the responsibility for immigration passed from the State Governments to the Commonwealth Government. After the abolition of the Victorian Department of Trade and Customs, the records passed to the Ports and Harbours Branch of the Public Works Department, which was its succeeding State body, and then just before World War II, the records were transferred to the then Melbourne Public Library.

As with much other governmental activity, the aims in the creation of these records were largely financial, but also included a general enumeration of immigrants and a check on the type of immigrant to be subsidised with assisted immigrants, and those to be excluded as "undesirable" in the unassisted immigrants.

The format of the records reflects these purposes. Records of assisted immigrants consist of bound passenger lists created in accordance with the several Acts which were primarily to introduce cheap, though if possible, skilled, labour to the colony and to redress in part the imbalance of the sexes in the colony by giving preference to single women and girls, and families with lots of daughters. Acts enforcing the recording of unassisted immigrants were for enumeration, payment of a capitation fee on landing and to exclude those considered undesirable, which included people thought likely to become a burden upon the charitable institutions of the colony, that is the sick and the destitute, and also included non-Europeans regarding whose entry, hostility was expressed as early as the 1840's.

USES to which these records are currently put were certainly not envisaged at their creation, and may be summarised under the subheadings of; Administration, Research, and Genealogy.

The administrative use consists of searches made by officers of the Commonwealth, or on their behalf by staff of the P.R.O., into the more recent lists of arrivals with regard to establishing residence in Australia for Repatriation, pension or other benefits, and for obtaining Australian passports by people not born here.

Research consists of a small though steady rate of enquiry for Tertiary and other studies, books, articles, etc. The genealogical usage is the use of the records for tracing the enquirers' forebears in the construction of family trees and other allied interests.

It has been the growth in this last sector which prompted the indexing of the immigrant records. These enquiries have in fact grown from about thirty a year when the records were first received from the P.W.D., to about two hundred a month at present which has resulted in a huge amount of time consuming and often repetitive searching by the P.R.O. staff. Some institutions have coped with this problem either by banning such enquiries, or by establishing paid "accredited researchers" who, for a fee, do the research on the enquirers' behalf.

These solutions have not been considered desirable in Victoria. Other possibilities which have been considered are, the permitting of direct public searching, this being ruled out by the fragile nature of the records and problems of administration; use of a microfilm duplicate set by the public again for various reasons impractical; and the use of computers, but this is far too expensive to be undertaken. So the records are, at least in part, being indexed as it were by hand.

THE first group to be indexed were the assisted immigrant records, which run from 1839 - 71, when the scheme was discontinued, and which were partially indexed when I joined the Archives Section in 1966. Despite limited staff numbers, the total staff then being four people, and severe limitations of equipment, many of the entries being written on "cards" made from the backs of photographic spoils cut to size, a large proportion of the some 168,000 names of these assisted immigrants had been indexed.

At that stage, some assistance was available from students doing the Archives papers with the Library Training School associated with the State Library of Victoria. However, as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology took over library training, this source of assistance stopped, and the indexing of these records and some unassisted arrivals proceeded at a very slow pace, until 1969, when unexpected and most useful help was offered.

One of our enquirers, Mrs. W.G. Morgan of Box Hill, offered voluntary assistance to the P.R.O., on the proviso that the work go to her, rather than vice versa. The Chief Archivist accepted this most generous offer and since then the indexing has forged ahead at a rate which the P.R.O. staff unaided could never have approached, let alone attained.

As the project stands at present, the assisted immigrants, 1839-71, are indexed, and the unassisted immigrants have been indexed to 1859 completely, with indexing in progress for 1860 and 1861. The numbers involved are enormous, for example, the net immigration alone to Victoria for the years 1851-61, was 400,045 persons.

THE system of indexing is straight forward. Passenger lists for a set period are taken to Mrs. Morgan, along with the cards, which are a standard line supplied by the Government Printer, along with any other storing or sorting equipment needed.

Originally, she would number the pages on each passenger list and then on the card put the surnames in block letters, and the Christian name or names, initials and/or title, and the page number in small case letters.

The cards were then bundled with each list separately bound and marked with the ship's name and arrival date. More recently it has been found necessary to put on the person's name and their nationality, using the abbreviations: E-English and Welsh; S-Scottish; I-Irish; and F-Foreigners; these being the varieties of nationality given on most lists; to distinguish the many persons of the same name who arrived, without having to refer back to the passenger list in each case.

After the lists and cards are returned, every card is checked against the list and if any alterations are thought necessary, checking is undertaken by a second person before any alteration is made.

Mrs Morgan marks any names on the list which she is unable to decipher, with a pencil stroke and on return an attempt is made to give it a card. Whereas this can be done in most cases, occasionally, two alternate cards, each with a reference to the other are used, whilst still more infrequently, where the name remains completely incomprehensible, it is left out. After the cards have been checked, the ships' names and dates of arrival are stamped on.

Alphabetising is commenced only when all the cards for the year are completed and is usually the longest process. The cards are then shelved in their years for unassisted immigrants, rather than in one sequence as most enquirers specify a year, or a few years, of arrival, and the large numbers of cards for common names that would occur in one sequence, is thought to hinder fast and accurate searching.

When labelling the drawers, each year is given a separate colour, and the year as well as the letters contained in it, are marked on each drawer.

The assisted immigrants cards are in one straight sequence, partly as it was done that before I arrived, but mainly as the records don't fall into annual groups like the unassisted immigrant lists, the lists in this case being bound in a series of books of over-lapping years.

AS REGARDS problems encountered with indexing, the assisted immigrants present fewest, since they are all names from the United Kingdom and the lists are usually well written, and in alphabetical order.

Among the few problems, are incompletely numbered pages in some books which had to be added when this was at the start of the book in Roman numerals to distinguish them from the ordinary Arabic ones; incorrect numbering of pages; a sequence of books given letter suffixes such as A, B, etc., which for certain periods, contain one half of each passenger list, the other being in the ordinary number sequence; and the mis-spelling of names.

One associated problem is the division of the lists into married couples with the children under 14; single males over 14 and single females over 14, which, split up into these sections makes reconstruction of a group very hard, e.g., lately an enquiry came from Edinburgh about immigration from the island of St. Kilda to Victoria in 1853. There were only six surnames on the island, the families were large and with them were many other families of the same surnames from the same county as St. Kilda, i.e., Inverness, but from the mainland of Scotland. It proved impossible to correctly allot all the single men and women to their correct relationships.

Another problem with these lists, but which occurs much more frequently on the unassisted list, is alternative spelling of the same name, particularly transliterations of Gaelic names, such as the Irish Maher/Meagher.

This problem is very widespread on the unassisted passenger lists, along with appalling attempts at spelling foreign, particularly German and Italian names by English-speaking clerks. In the case of Italian names, the surname and Christian name is often reversed which caused much confusion until this mistake was pointed out to us. As these passenger lists are usually badly written in longhand and are seldom alphabetical, the illegibility of these lists is a severe problem.

AS REGARDS alphabetising, the main problem apart from the length of time involved, is the variation in the spellings of names and their derivatives; e.g., the surnames Philips/Philipson, have over eight such variations.

The smaller groups of records, which I mentioned in passing earlier, may now be listed. These are:-

1. Exiles. These were convicts on "conditional pardon", who arrived in the 1840's. They are in the same books as the assisted immigrants and are included in that index.
2. Newspaper arrivals - 1839-52. These names were taken from newspapers and put into booklets many years ago, and consist mainly of cabin, i.e., first class passengers. These names have also been put with the assisted immigrants and it has been considered too complicated and time consuming to now put them in a separate sequence.
3. Fare paying passengers and crew of assisted immigrant ships. These were fairly recently discovered and indexed along with the assisted immigrants - the source of the information being the same.
4. Unassisted arrivals not included in item 3, or in the main set of U.K. arrivals. These consist of odd lists or books of lists discovered in other groups of records, or not in any sequence within the immigration records. Each of these groups has its own separate index.

THE index of unassisted immigrants includes arrivals from U.K. ports, only since those are the most frequently enquired into, and they contain the greatest number of arrivals. The index at present will only be taken to 1871, for the sake of uniformity with the assisted immigrants, and this period would cover about 80% of enquiries. Unassisted lists of arrivals are also held after 1852 for other ports. These, except for those from Europe, will not be indexed in the foreseeable future.

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