

SOCIETY OF INDEXERS IN AUSTRALIA

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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 TEN

FREE TO MEMBERS

DECEMBER. 1974

NEXT MEETING

Note new venue for this month.

Mr. P. Dawe, the Chief Librarian for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, will explain the role of C.S.I.R.O. in the dissemination of information at the next meeting of the Society on Thursday, 12 December 1974. As the R.M.I.T. library will be closed following the end of the academic year, the meeting will be held this month in the R.M.I.T. Council Dining Room, ground floor of building one, entrance from 124 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne. Time: 7.45 pm.

This follows the illuminating description of the activities of the State Library in the indexing field by Miss Margery C. Ramsay the Principal Librarian of the State Library of Victoria, at the last meeting of the Society. Her talk forms the supplement to this *Newsletter*.

NEW MEMBERS

A CORDIAL WELCOME to new members, all in Brisbane area:

Dr. Jeanne C. Owen, Head of the Department of Librarianship of the Queensland Institute of Technology; Mrs. Marguerite Fitzgerald, Capalaba; Mrs. Edna J.C. Jenks, St. Lucia; and Mrs. L.F. Lynch, Clayfield.

Initial enquiries regarding the Society in Queensland now may be made to Mrs. Mavis Michell who has kindly consented to act as liaison member in this area. Her address is: 54 Beatrice Street, Taringa, Qld. 4068; phone: 71 2549.

YOU are cordially invited to come and to bring a friend to hear Mr. Dawe and to share in the discussion, coffee biscuits and fellowship that follows.

WOULD members who are not receiving their copies of The Indexer within a reasonable time after publication date in April and October let me know, so that I can take it up with London.

To Members in Victoria

FILL IN AND RETURN THIS SLIP ON OR BEFORE 5 December, 1974.

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 12 December, 1974.

will*

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

(signed)

*strike word(s) which are not applicable.

INDEXING ACTIVITIES IN THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

An address by Miss Margery C. Ramsay, Principal Librarian of the State Library of Victoria to members of The Society of Indexers in Australia on 22 October, 1974. ✓

ON THE WHOLE, libraries are more involved in cataloguing whole works or discrete parts of works than in indexing, but they also do some indexing, and of course there is no hard and fast dividing line between the two activities. I want to say a little about both, because I think it is interesting to compare them.

So far as possible, libraries make use of indexes compiled by other people in preference to compiling their own, but such indexes do not always exist.

Coverage by published indexes is an important consideration for librarians in deciding whether or not they will purchase a particular work, especially in the case of periodicals. However, if a work is regarded as sufficiently important it will be purchased regardless of the availability of an index, and the library may decide to compile an index of its own.

Libraries do not often compile indexes to monographs; usually they concentrate on indexes to periodicals, newspapers or special materials of one sort or another. Sometimes these indexes are published. More often they are indexes maintained on cards purely for in-house use.

All large libraries compile and maintain numbers of in-house indexes and concern has been expressed that these valuable keys to information are available only in the libraries concerned and are not accessible in the many other places where they would be useful. The National Library has recently microfilmed a number of the indexes in the Mitchell Library, but libraries are frequently unwilling to have their indexes copied on the grounds that although they are useful to staff they tend to be crude and do not meet acceptable indexing standards.

THIS is not, of course, true of all indexes produced by libraries. Some of the most important published Australian indexes, such as Australian Public Affairs Information Index, Australian Science Index and Australian Education Index are compiled in libraries, but these are a minority. The State Library has not done much major indexing work, but it will be publishing soon one important index the Feely Argus Index 1846-58, and hopes to publish within two or three years an Art bibliography and index covering various publications from the earlier part of this century. Work on this index has been carried on spasmodically over a number of years.

Some individual librarians have compiled important indexes. For example, the index to the Australian Encyclopaedia was compiled by two former Melbourne librarians, Ellinor Archer and Leigh Scott. ✓ ✓

The most important in-house indexes maintained in the State Library are in the field of Australiana. Examples of these are the biography index, the illustrations index, a 19th Century business histories index and 19th Century subject index to Victorian periodicals. Comparable indexes are being compiled in the Art Library to cover such things as Australian exhibition catalogues and registers of students who have attended the National Gallery School.

Most of the State Library's indexes are compiled by staff in slack periods when they are on desk duty, but valuable work has also been done by volunteer indexers such as Mrs. H.G. Morgan, who has for some years been indexing the shipping records in the Public Records Office. ✓

Some other indexes compiled by outsiders in the course of other work have come to the Library, for example the index assembled by A.S. Kenyon during the compilation of his "Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip".

I HAVE MENTIONED two differences between the work of the professional indexer and the librarian. The professional indexer is most frequently concerned with a single work whereas the librarian is usually concerned with a collection of publications, and the librarian is usually indexing for internal use, not for publication.

Other differences - and difficulties - arise from the cumulative nature of many library indexes and catalogues.

The terminology used by authors and the concepts which they explore vary from one period in time to another, and both the terminology and the concepts are reflected in indexes covering their work.

The typical published periodical index is divided chronologically into a large number of volumes, and the knowledgeable searcher realizes that in searching he will have to recheck and adjust his list of terms to allow for this as he works through a series of volumes. If he is searching retrospectively back to the beginnings of a subject, he will often find that the terms disappear and that the earliest material is concealed under general headings. This is a good reason for searching retrospectively when one is in unknown territory, as if one loses the trail, one can look for clues in publications already retrieved.

A single-sequence catalogue or index built up over a long period is a good deal harder to follow, and it is often made more difficult by adherence to older, established headings without adequate references to newer terms.

The new practice of using successive forms of name for corporate bodies and for periodicals instead of putting all entries under the latest or earliest form of name has introduced a strong chronological element into the catalogue, and one wonders whether a somewhat comparable flexibility with subject headings might not be both feasible and advantageous.

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