

# 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 FIVE

FREE TO MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 1974

### NEXT MEETING

INDEXING in a parliamentary library will be described by Miss Josephine McGovern, the Librarian for the Parliament of Victoria, at the next meeting of the Society on Tuesday, 12 February 1974, 8 p.m., at flat 3, 30 Foote Street, Elwood.

This follows the informative talk by Mrs Jean Uhl, honorary archivist for the State Library of Victoria, in which she entranced her audience - the largest since the inauguration of the Society of Indexers in Australia - with a behind-the-scenes description of the indexing of Victoria's historic criminal records. She also referred to her experience of indexing on the premises of a publisher who had never previously engaged a free-lance indexer. This publisher had appealed to the Society for help to overcome an emergency and Mrs Uhl was able to successfully fulfil the assignment. The full text of Mrs Uhl's talk is given as a supplement to this *Newsletter*.

You are cordially invited to come and bring a guest to the February meeting. Please say you will come.

### AN INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE.

*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 MARCH, 1974.

NEW MEMBERS

THIS month we welcome as a new member Mrs Rhoda W. Mills, librarian for the Prahran Municipal Library, Victoria; and, as an institutional member, a special welcome to the University of Western Australia.

Mrs. Brenda Miller, the former corresponding member in Australia for the Society in England, will be overseas till September 1974.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

ENROLMENTS for the correspondence course on the principles of indexing continue to be received. To date 27 members (about 43 per cent of Australian membership) have participated.

FROM THE BOOK REVIEWS

TECHNOLOGY OF WINE MAKING by M.A. Amerine, H.W. Berg and W.V. Cruess. AVI Publishing Co., Conn., 1972.

Each chapter is liberally referenced and a detailed index is also provided.

CAROTENOIDS by O. Isler (ed). 932 pages. Birkhauser Verlag, Basel and Stuttgart, 1971. This is a massive reference book for carotenoid workers, beautifully bound and printed and containing exhaustive author and subject indexes.

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To Members in Victoria

FILL IN AND RETURN THIS SLIP ON OR BEFORE **6** FEBRUARY, 1974.

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

will\*

1 will not\* be attending the meeting of the Society of Indexers in Australia on 12 February, 1974.

will\*

1 will not\* be bringing a guest to this meeting.

(signed) .....

\* Strike word(s) which are not applicable.

INDEXING VICTORIA'S HISTORIC CRIMINAL RECORDS

A rather accidental advent into the generally lesser known work of an archivist has proved to be of immense value as an introduction to the art of book indexing. I have come to the conclusion that for both, although very different exercises, one needs stamina, enthusiasm, an eye for detail and possibly a background of early training in discipline, that is, not having been allowed to be slapdash in one's misspent youth, an echo for ever sounding in the ear of that horrid childhood reminder that a job worth doing is worth doing well; to this I think could be added good handwriting, printing and longhand, an ability to interpret bad handwriting sometimes practically illegible and, of course, more importantly perhaps, an ability to sense what an author is really getting at and how the minds of those who will use an index might or might not work.

The Archives Section of the State Library of Victoria in 1973 had its title changed and is now properly referred to as the Public Record Office since the passing of an Act with Respect to the Establishment of a Public Record Office and the Preservation, Management and Utilisation of the Public Records of the State, No. 8418 - a copy is obtainable from the Government Printing Office, price 20 cents.

In the voluntary work I began in April 1970, I was strongly motivated by many years of historical research and the realisation that so much material held by libraries and available for research was unindexed, uncatalogued, unknown and therefore unloved. Although it may be an absorbing and intriguing pastime to wade through masses of material looking for just one clue, it is also unnecessarily time consuming and frustrating when there is a job to be completed in a given time, or a talk or an article or a book to be written with a dead-line attached.

The material thrust upon me to index and catalogue had lain unloved for 28 years after its acquisition from the Crown Law Department, but here, I soon realised, within the pages of the depositions concerned written down on smooth blue real linen paper - now of such great rarity - in various styles of handwriting and spelling, lay a unique record, unresearched, of the very earliest days of the law in Port Phillip and Victoria, but not only of the law but of a whole social history from the beginnings of white settlement in this part of the world where you and I are fortunate to live at this time.

These records were from the Supreme Court, Criminal Sessions from the very first case conducted by that somewhat irascible gentleman, Mr. Justice Willis, in April 1841, in the Melbourne Supreme Court, there being no county courts at that time. Here then was a challenge of the first water to an indexer. Not knowing when I began that there was much more to it than merely devising a workable card index system which down the years to come would, one hoped, actually work for those who might use it, I did not entirely quail when opening the Criminal Record Book Prothonotary for the period 1863-1873.

My choice would have been, like Alice, to have begun at the beginning and gone on to the end and then stopped, but as one of the staff of the Archives had already made a small beginning for this period this had to be my initial guideline. Indexing from the Criminal Record Book was comparatively simple and straightforward.

The index cards are arranged thus:

SMITH, John

31 - 3 G.

5 - 176 - 3

Interpretation being: 31: the number given to that particular crime, for example, Forgery; 3: the number of the Court, that is Melbourne. 5: the number of the Criminal Record Book; 176: the page in that book and 3: the number against the criminal's name. Each type of crime is given a number, each Court a number (for example, Ballarat 7, Castlemaine 8).

Crimes and numbers thereof are recorded on cards but as the numbers are now up to 526 it soon became impossible to have to refer to each crime card for the relevant number even though I devised a method of attaching each card on to a board. I therefore asked for an index book and began my own personal index for crimes with cross references which has proved greatly time-saving and more than worth the time spent on compiling it initially.

The most frequent types of crime, horse stealing, larceny, stealing, etc., tend to become ingrained in the memory so that reference to the index book is not necessary but crimes which may only occur once or twice in 12 years such as Unlawfully celebrating the marriage of a minor or Injury by Furious Driving are rather hard to commit to memory by number when the numbers reach 500 plus! With the modus operandi working smoothly from the Criminal Record Book the pile of index cards grew sufficiently rapidly for me to request steel files to store them in when alphabetized - this request revealed the difficulties of staff owing to the paucity of Archives equipment.

I also at this time requested that I had the actual Briefs on hand, so that various details could be checked immediately and preparation made for the corresponding number on the card to be marked on the Brief - at times I felt like saying a la the late Mr. Churchill 'give me the tools and I will finish the job, but .....,'

AT FIRST the number on the Brief was made with a rubber stamp which was an unnecessarily tedious process and in any case not very clear as the figures were very small and the stamp had to be inked frequently. This did not please my time and motion study notions so I changed to a black marking pen which proved to be much quicker and the figures much easier to see when seeking in the boxes later for a particular Brief.

The Briefs arrived on my floor in bundles folded in half and tied with red tape, A.D. 1841 and from the amount of it it is easier to see where the expression 'red tape' came from in connection with any public service. The Briefs were mostly in month order for a particular year, but when sorting had been accomplished with heavy work by a feather duster, it was found that some belonged to a year ahead and that there were many Briefs missing altogether in that year.

With some order established out of the chaos it was then possible to go through the Criminal Record Book and the index cards, mark the Brief with the relevant number making sure that it was the same number as on the index card, and stamp both book and card with BRIEF EXTANT. At first

I was brought the Briefs corresponding to a whole book which in the case of some meant 5 years; this proved too much at one time except when in an historic frenzy I could indulge in going through the whole lot in search of clues about something I was particularly interested in, but this I learned rapidly was what one should NOT do - become diverted, one of the hardest lessons to learn when indexing such material but who would not be tempted to make notes and contact people knowing that once the Brief was boxed and shelved it might never be looked at again?

Later, I asked that the Briefs for one year only should be brought out to me which proved a much better arrangement. The numbers of crimes committed for any particular year differed considerably down the years, and this could make an interesting study for a criminologist or a sociologist - why for instance was there only one hanging in 1856? As the Sergeant in charge of Public Relations at Russell Street Police Headquarters suggested, perhaps the hangman was very tired that year after 1855 when there were 15 hangings!

As this is a talk on indexing and not on historical finds, I must curb my enthusiasm to regale you with spicy items of information and the wealth of historical plums to be found in this material although the two can hardly be separated in an undertaking of this nature.

It must be mentioned, however, that when I received Book 1 after Books 5 and 6 for 1863 to 1873, Book 1 for the period 1841 to 1853 proved of such uniqueness that the system commenced for the former period had to be necessarily re-thought. It was discovered that every criminal entered in the book was GUILTY. Naturally this brought forth the question: why during that period was every man and woman found Guilty? Was no one let off at all?

After due consideration it was judged that for that period names of those found not guilty were never entered in the Criminal Record Book for whatever reason they were not convicted, including escapees. When the pile of Briefs for this period was received it was found that even though a prisoner had not been convicted and sentenced there might be a Brief for the case which came before the Court.

This necessitated another series of index cards marked in red at the top NOT IN CRIMINAL RECORD BOOK, the name of offender as on the other cards, his-her crime in numbers or words and 3 for the Court - Melbourne - as at that time there were no county courts established. The letters NCR were used in the right-hand corner of the card with the numbering system starting from 1.

This peculiarity of the Criminal Sessions Melbourne Court in those days vastly delayed my progress in indexing and cataloguing for that period. The peculiarities of the Clerk of the day also delayed my progress as he had thought fit to number the book pages from 1 to 45 and then start again at 1 for no apparent reason and he had also never considered that some poor indexer some one hundred years hence might find difficulty in working out a system of identification when he had chosen to have one, two and sometimes three 3's on the same page, or two 1's on the same page and so on: this might have been due to the scarcity of paper or books in those days

or perhaps because there were relatively few cases for a particular month of the years 1841 to 1843 and being of an economical turn of mind he did not consider it fitting to start a new page for February or March when there was still so much room left for January! This little difficulty was overcome by putting 1(a), 2(a), etc., on the cards and above the book, page and criminal's number writing the month and year so that there could be immediate identification of the period.

When Book 1 was finished I thought in my innocence that the NCR exercise was over and done with but even up to 1857, Briefs are still being discovered among the piles for which there is no entry in the Criminal Record Book. So far, for the periods 1841 to 1858 these NCR Briefs number 2,268. I may add that the wealth of information found in these 2,268 has been well worth the task. While dealing with the Briefs and reading them it was soon obvious that here in these depositions written in the plain and simple language of the early 1800's and taken down by policemen who couldn't spell very well but relied on their own delightful form of phonetic spelling - and often it is a clue from which county of England or Ireland they came from! - here, was a unique and untapped source of Melbourne's and Victoria's earliest history, which once I had dealt with the Brief and it was boxed and returned for shelving, might never come to light again.

Therefore, what is known as the "3rd Party File" was born. From the Briefs I have compiled a reference file of Doctors, Ships, Inns, Soldiers of the 40th Regiment, Stations and Squatters, Police and Police Stations - many of which were located on station properties - Place Names, Creeks, and for those genealogically inclined Surnames and Trades.

All cards have as much information on them as possible with, of course, dates and reference numbers of the Briefs where they can be located. It was also found that through the Briefs connected with murders or manslaughter, it was possible to correct and enlarge police records at Russell Street.

For the gold era period, numerous Chinese come into the records both as prisoners and witnesses and these at present warrant a separate drawer of the filing system which suggestion was found to pay dividends for a student who was writing a thesis on Chinese on the goldfields. The possibilities to which all this material lends itself in so many fields of research seems endless but the main consideration of the indexer must be naturally to have a really workable system which can be readily put to use when it is required.

So far with the inquiries which have been made it would appear to be working efficiently. There are many facets of indexing such records which come to light only as one proceeds with the task such as wondering what to do with an 'unknown body' or a body with a name despatched unlawfully by an 'unknown person' but this is only one of the many challenges met along the way and it becomes clearer as one proceeds that the use of that uncommon attribute, common sense, must be well cultivated.

FROM this archival experience and the introduction to the Society of Indexers of Australia came the very different exercise of book indexing and although it is not exactly comparable with archival work - my criminals being on the whole more relaxing! - I quickly realised that if I had not

had this experience, book indexing would have made me tremble to anticipate. The actual physical handling of massive tomes, papers, cards, etc., the constant reading of the Briefs not only trains the hands but also the eye so that galley proofs did not present the traumatic experience I thought it might.

Also having had published a local history which in the writing necessitates collecting thousands of bits of paper with extraordinarily obtuse clues and messages thereon which one hopes will one day emerge as a coherent sentence or paragraph, it was not so difficult for me to handle cards and/or slips with entries running from A - Z when preparing an index for a multi-author book which the authors should have compiled themselves, and which some rather unexperienced person had already started.

I was informed by the publishers that this was the first book which had been given to someone outside their office to be indexed - the reputation of the Society and mine, if any, was at stake! I was somewhat disconcerted to find on the cards already FLO GINGS and MET ODISM - as this was a book for 4th formers in New South Wales, I wondered if Flo was one of the more obscure ladies of Sydney in the 19th Century and if Met Odism was some new kind of cult. It made some difference naturally in alphabetising to realise that what was meant was FLOGGINGS and METHODISM.

Another multi-author book for tertiary students revealed how different publishers can be in their methods and type of index required and also how much easier it is to work from a fully printed proof rather than galley proofs and paste-ups which land on the floor at the most inconvenient moments.

One question which arises from this experience is: Should an Indexer also be a proof reader? Also I feel that if the publisher requires a completed index to be typed by the indexer, it would be extremely helpful if we could all know exactly how a type-setter operates as well as how an Editor operates. The modern trend for no capital letters or full stops after abbreviations is difficult if one does not know the various quirks of various publishers. Will indexers ever know whether the index they have compiled is a good one or not?