Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI)

ANZSI NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, number 6, July 2005

From the President

Mentoring is high on the Society's agenda at the moment, with two Branches (Vic and NZ) running active programs and the ACT about to embark down a similar path. But a formal mentoring program is not the only way to benefit from the experience of others. I'd like to share with you an activity that the ACT Region Branch recently initiated, which takes a 'group' approach to mentoring.

A small group of members met on 21 May to take part in the first of a series of practical workshops on cumulative newspaper indexing. The workshop grew out of a meeting a few weeks earlier with Antoinette Buchanan, Librarian of the ACT Heritage Library. Our Branch President, Geraldine Triffitt, had been discussing with Antoinette the possibility of using material from her collection for our mentoring program. As a result, Antoinette addressed a meeting of interested mentors and mentees on the value of indexes for local history collections. As part of her presentation, Antoinette showed the group a range of items in her collection that she felt would benefit from an index.

Among these were the early newspapers of Canberra, some short-lived (the earliest had only two issues), but containing a wealth of information about local people, businesses, news and events. Much of this information was lost to researchers due to the lack of good indexes, so that a cumulative index to the full run of even one of these newspapers would be a great addition to local history scholarship.

The idea of a group collectively working on a cumulative index was a bit outside the 'normal' mentoring process, which matches one indexer to one mentor for the duration of one discrete indexing project. However, we all agreed that this was a worthy project from which we could all benefit. I agreed to coordinate the activity and get the ball rolling; some of our potential mentors agreed to assist, and the rest of the group (all potential mentees) bravely volunteered to do the job.

A different kind of 'mentoring', but one which I am sure will benefit the whole group.

Our first meeting, on 21 May, was designed to set the 'ground rules'. Antoinette briefed us on the types of information local history researchers were interested in, and this set the broad boundaries for our indexing. People, events, topics of concern, photographs, and even ads for local businesses were candidates for indexing entries. Michael Harrington reinforced Antoinette's comments on the importance of including topics as well as personal names, and of using the index to provide an overview of the issues of the day.

We chose the *Canberra Community News*, a monthly newspaper-cum-journal with 24 issues published between October 1925 and December 1927, and allocated three issues to each indexer, examining the structure and layout of the newspaper as well as its content and the suitability of various articles for indexing.

Our examination raised a series of questions, and we worked out common approaches to the problems: do we index letters to the editor? do we index poetry? do we index social/gossip columns, and how do we deal with people who are only named by first names, or nicknames? what do we do with photographs which have ambiguous captions e.g. 'the big three' – a photo of three unnamed men? We also set some guidelines for more mundane matters – a standard format for our citations, for example, and an agreement to use a thesaurus in order to standardise terms for topics or subject entries.

We agreed to have a series of half-day workshops until the project was finished, to discuss and share our work to date, bring up any problems, and sort out any misunderstandings or confusions, so that we are all working to the same depth and indexing the same types of material. When we have all indexed our three issues we will have a special meeting where we tackle the problems of putting everything together, ensuring consistency across the headings, etc – in short, 'editing' the index.

That's the stage we are at. At our next meeting we will bring our preliminary

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Deadline for August issue: 29 July
… for September issue: 26 August

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It is *your* newsletter, and we are totally dependent on contributions, both large and small, from members. Please contact the editor if you have any questions about the suitability of items for publication. The editor reserves the right to edit or abridge contributions.

Please send files via email in MS Word Rich Text Format or plain text (ASCII). Do not embed footnotes in Word files.

Next deadline
29 July for the August issue.

Graphics
Image files can be accepted in most common formats. Do not embed images in text files. Camera-ready art and photos can be scanned by the editor. Note that photos need to be clear, sharp and contrasty if they are to copy well in black and white.

Advertising charges
Full page A$175; half page A$90; quarter page A$35; full year 10 for the price of 8.

Membership charges
A$55 per year, A$30 half year (Jan to June). Student member A$30.
Subscriptions to the Newsletter: A$40 p.a.

The Indexer
(international indexing journal)
Maureen MacGlashan, Executive Editor
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Would *YOU* like to edit your newsletter ?

Peter Judge will be away for 4 weeks at the end of August and unable to produce the September issue. A volunteer (or volunteers) is/are needed to take over just for this month—receiving the copy, editing and laying it out, getting it printed and then mailing it. Peter will provide templates and a set of mailing labels and the Treasurer will give you a cheque for the post. How about it? Sounds fun? Contact Peter by phone at (+61 2) 6296 6211 or email <newsletter@aussi.org>.

News and coming events

NSW Branch

The NSW Branch welcomes new members Jacinta Ebbott, Mary Howard and Jane Lovett-Cameron of Sydney.

The Web Development Working Group of the NSW Committee met on 11 June in Glebe to finalise work on the specifications for the new web site. The group includes Helen Skewes, Glenda Browne, Jon Jermey and Caroline Colton. We had a great day getting through most of the work in the morning and tying up loose ends over lunch at a local Turkish pizza restaurant where Bill and Jenny Jermey-Browne joined us. After lunch we all hit the book shops which topped off a very fruitful and enjoyable day. This is the last step before the task of graphically designing and building the site begins, so the end draws significantly nearer.

Caroline Colton
President NSW Branch

Anybody going to the Frankfurt Book Fair?

Deutsches Netzwerk der Indexer (DNI) plans to hold a meeting at the forthcoming Frankfurt Book Fair, on 20 October commencing at 2.00 pm. The first hour will be spent discussing German matters, then there will be a panel discussion on indexing with German publishers. Two indexers from the Netherlands and one from the UK have already expressed interest in attending the meeting. If any ANZSI indexers happen to be at the Fair they would be most welcome. And there will be no language problem – we all speak English!

Jochen Fassbender
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(from the President, continued from page 1)

indexing attempts to the table and discuss any problems or queries that arose. We expect to hold another two or three half-day workshops before the project is completed.

It will be a while before we can evaluate the success or otherwise of this project. Instead of the master/apprentice approach of the traditional mentoring scheme, our approach has, by necessity, been one of peer cooperation for problem solving (cynics might call it 'the blind leading the blind'!). However, even at this early stage it has been a useful exercise. It has brought together nine people with various levels of expertise in different types of indexing, and allowed them to share ideas. It has given the less experienced a chance to work alongside those with more time in the profession. By the end of the project, I am sure we will all know each other better, and perhaps think about collaborative efforts in other areas. It is challenging and fun, too. A different kind of 'mentoring', but one which I am sure will benefit the whole group.

Lynn Farkas, ANZSI President

Where does all the money go?

The Victorian Branch of ANZSI visited Philanthropy Australia on 11 April, hosted by Louise Arkles, the Research & Information Manager. Philanthropy Australia is a membership body for philanthropic trusts and foundations which make grants, and the peak body for the sector in Australia. The word philanthropy means 'love of mankind', but in the context of Philanthropy Australia it means 'private money, privately managed, for the public good'; more specifically, it is the giving of money by trusts and foundations to registered charities or community groups.

The Research and Information Service was set up by Louise and her staff to serve the members and employees of the organisation. It also takes many enquiries from people looking for grants, from researchers and from the press. The library catalogue currently includes around 3000 items on philanthropy, charities, and the not-for-profit sector. The classification used is a custom-made system adapted from an American model, whilst a local thesaurus has been created for indexing their numerous publications, such as *The Australian Directory of Philanthropy* (latest ed. 2004–05). This is a listing of philanthropic trusts and foundations which make grants, and is available both in paper copy and online. Entries are filed alphabetically and it is comprehensively indexed by name and subject.

The organisation also publishes a journal, *Australian Philanthropy*, which is a very useful tool for practitioners and researchers alike, and is comprehensively indexed. They run workshops on submission writing and applying for grants, but they do not act as intermediaries or make recommendations on who will give money nor which projects should receive funding. They also review funding submissions for a fee.

Some foundations, like The Myer Foundation, provide information on what they fund and publish submission guidelines on their websites. Others don't accept submissions or even consent to be listed in the *Directory*. Historically the philanthropic world has been quite private or even secretive, but things are starting to change as more corporations are publicising their philanthropic activities and larger numbers of young people are volunteering, serving on boards of charities or creating their own philanthropic foundations.

This trend toward greater accountability and professionalisation of the sector has resulted in a greater demand on the Research and Information Service, and an increased use of the library catalogue and indexed publications. To celebrate this we presented Louise with one of our conference T-shirts and ended the evening with a cosy dinner and further discussion.

Jenny Restarick
Vice President, Vic Branch

Button up your overcoat

Retired school teacher and craftsperson Sally 'Buttons' has collected buttons for over 20 years. The Victorian Branch of ANZSI met her on 8 June to hear about her collection and how she organises it. Sally displayed only a small sample of her extensive collection but she entertained us with descriptions of the different types of button and fascinating tales of how she obtained and sorts her buttons.

Sally divides her buttons by substance: marine (mother of pearl or other shells, etc), animal (bone, ivory, leather, horn, fur, etc), vegetable (wood, seeds, rubber, etc), mineral (silver, pewter, brass, etc) and man-made (glass, plastic, ceramic etc). She then groups the buttons by colour and size. The buttons are mounted, using plastic coated telephone wire, onto acid free picture framing mount off cuts and placed in a plastic bag. As she gives many demonstrations, Sally has found the easiest way of transporting these plastic bags is in plastic picnic baskets where they can be placed one on top of each other and easily carried to and from home and the car.

Deciding what a button is made of can sometimes be tricky. For example, ivory is smooth and glossy, while bone can have black flecks and whalebone is pinkish-yellow with arches like fingerprints. Buttons can have specific uses, for example, leather matrass buttons, double-faced pillow buttons, shoe buttons, buttons used on naval uniforms, buttons for morning wear, or the pearl buttons used by the English Pearly Kings and Queens.

Initially Sally just collected the buttons. She now realises that the stories behind the buttons are as important as the buttons themselves and stores these details with the individual buttons. It could be where she bought the buttons, who gave them to her, where she found them or who made or painted the buttons. Searching for buttons is half the fun of collecting. A trip to Adelaide is punctuated with stops at all the Op shops along the way. One collection was scavenged from vacant land beside an old paper mill, from the days when rags were used to make paper.

As a craftsperson herself, Sally had many examples of hand made buttons. These were made from painted pearls, sliced quandongs, pottery and silver mounted Wedgwood kangaroo buttons. This entertaining session pointed out that the skills of indexing can be applied to all sorts of things. I am sure I was not the only one to go home and have a good look at the basket of buttons lurking at the back of the cupboard.

Jenny Restarick
Vice President, Vic Branch

Looking well ahead in Victoria!

Thursday, 4 October 2005

Vic Branch AGM and Dinner
Graduate House, 224 Leicester St, Carlton

Keynote address: '**The Naked Indexer**'.

From the literature and other thoughts

They're closing the libraries

Anne Lamott wrote in the *Boston Globe* (4 June 2005) about plans by Salinas, California (Steinbeck country), to close their libraries because of budget cuts. You need to register to view the article at <www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/06/04/in_steinbeck_country_we_said_no_to_closing_the_libraries/?page=1>. Rob Richardson posted an excerpt on Index-L on 5 June. Salinas is a poor community in a rich county, so a group of writers and actors staged a 24-hour 'emergency read-in' protest. Lamott wrote 'We were there to celebrate intelligence capabilities that our country can actually be proud of – those of librarians'.

Joan Soo wrote on the experience of Shasta County, California, which closed its libraries during a cash crunch around 1980 (Index-L, 6 June 2005) when a company providing year-round employment closed, and people with children stopped moving there. It cost millions to re-start the libraries. Some Australian country towns have discovered that spending money to improve town services (e.g. swimming pools and, presumably, libraries) can help the town financially by encouraging people to live there.

Continuing the theme, *inCite* (June 2005) has noted the closure of libraries by the President of Turkmenistan on the grounds that 'nobody reads books or [goes] to libraries.' Central and student libraries will remain open. The closure of libraries is seen as a violation of intellectual freedom, along with widespread censorship and the blocking of access to online information resources.

And, closer to home, in my job as temporary librarian I had to catalogue a book on medical library downsizing. One of the aims of the mergers of area health services in NSW has been to cut back on duplication of administrative services. Many libraries are keen to get themselves classified with education or allied health rather than with corporate services to avoid the severest cuts. The irony for libraries is that so far the merger has led to more work rather than less, and it is hard to see how there could be many cost efficiencies, especially as libraries have already cooperated voluntarily in many ways to provide more efficient and effective services.

The Google trail on Michael Gorman

The election of Michael Gorman as ALA president-elect seems to have caused some dismay among blog-writers. Gorman is well-known to librarians as the co-author of *AACR2* (*Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*) – a fundamental resource for cataloguers, and the basis of many indexing rules with respect to format of names, entry points and so on.

Teleread: Bringing the E-Books Home (www.teleread.org/blog/?p=2957), quotes Gorman's criticisms of Google 'atomising' books (reducing them to out of context paragraphs) in a blog entry headed 'Gorman vs. e-books again'. They suggest that 'Libraries and the publishing world could help by working together to get full texts on line, via Google or otherwise – maybe even, gasp, a well-stocked national digital library system.'

Karen Schneider (8 June 2005, http://freerangelibrarian.com) discusses why she thinks Gorman got elected ('It's not that ALA is filled with idiots.'), and boils it down to name recognition, AACR2, demographics (coming from California, a big state) and feelings that he had been a library education reformer.

Dorothea Salo writes that she can get over Gorman's critical comments on blogs and Google, but that his cheap shots suggesting hip-hop meant simplemindedness were racially coded and unacceptable (http://cavlec.yarinareth.net/archives/2005/06/04/your-own-size).

I know nothing about Gorman beyond his involvement with *AACR2* so thought I should check for other opinions, thus learning that he resigned as president-elect just months before he would have become president (1 April, 2005; <www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA514238.html>). Hmmm….is that date significant? Yes, you can't trust everything you read in prestigious print publications such as *Library Journal* – see <www.virtualchase.com/tvcalert/apr05/4apr05.html#gorman> for clarification of the April Fool's Day joke. The majority of Google hits retrieved by a search of 'Michael Gorman ALA' are negative blogs, but this may be because he hit a spot with his comments on blogs in the *Library Journal* in February 2005.

Sydney Morning Herald, 15 June 2005, p. 30

In the obituary of Allan Ashbolt, 'Lion of the ABC', 1921-2005, the number of index entries in a book on the ABC was taken as an indication of the importance of his contribution.

> The index of Inglis's history [Ken Inglis, *This is the ABC*] conveys some idea of Ashbolt's effect upon the ABC: his entry is more extensive than all others over the half-century [1932-83] but for one chairman and three top managers. A powerful critic of the ABC, he saw it eventually as "an ideological arm of the capitalist state machinery, fulfilling the task of disseminating bourgeois tastes, opinions and attitudes". Yet he never felt he should be anywhere else.'

Glenda Browne

NSW KM Forum: blogs and wikis and such

Thursday, 7 July, 5.30 for 6.00 pm, at Standards Australia, 286 Sussex Street, Sydney NSW 2000. Entry free. Call James Digges on 0414 191 009 for after hours entry.

Social Software: Panacea... or Technology Fad?

Are blogs, wikis and other social software tools just another technology fad? Social software lets people rendezvous, connect or collaborate using a computer network. Learn about what this means for KM (knowledge management) systems and its effect on KM within organisations.

The speaker is James Dellow, Principal Consultant of Chief Technology Solutions. James has a decade of experience in the knowledge and information system space, including time spent within Ernst & Young's award winning Center for Business Knowledge. He recently completed a Master of Business & Technology at UNSW and also writes his own blog, <http://chieftech.blogspot.com/>.

[NSW KM Forum is at <www.nsw-km-forum.org.au>]

Meetings, meetings, and all that jazz

Max McMaster tells us, in a recent exchange of emails, that the Victorian Branch committee has been wondering how to get a better grasp on what is happening in our profession. The committee has suggested that each Branch might provide the newsletter editor with a calendar list of their upcoming activities, together with any information about indexing-related activities in their region. Any international activities they found out about could be added as well. If each Branch sent their details to the editor in some common format, it would just be a matter of cutting and pasting the lists together. Vic Branch has offered to start with material for the August issue, if this was thought a goer.

Glenda Browne comments that we already list events in the newsletter, so the Vic Branch must be aiming to extend the coverage and organise it better. It was suggested earlier that all this material might go on the front cover, but this turned out to be a very fiddly business.

It's not even certain, says Glenda, that we have enough events to justify any special trouble to structure them in the newsletter. They will also be announced on the new website as soon as it is up and running in its reorganised format.

At present the newsletter sometimes has more information about events (for example, on the training courses), sometimes less. It's up to the people putting on these events to let the editor know. Even if people don't attend, it is always interesting for them to see the breadth of activities going on.

There is a wide range of events in this month's newsletter, but the editor can only print what you send him. What do you think? Letters to the editor (email: newsletter@aussi.org) on this or other issues will always be welcome.

Intranet searching

Free industry briefing, afternoon of 31 August

Step Two Designs is concerned to improve communication between intranet teams from different organisations. To this end, they will present a free industry briefing on improving intranet search. This will held at the Mercure Hotel in Sydney, conveniently located next to Central station.

Topics covered include:

* best-practice design of search and result pages
* simple versus advanced search
* synonyms, taxonomies, and 'best bets'
* search engine usage
* 'tuning' search engine configuration
* selecting appropriate search tools

Numbers are strictly limited, and all participants must register in advance (walk-ins on the day will not be admitted).

Details at <www.steptwo.com.au/seminars/050831/index.html>
James Robertson, Step Two Designs Pty Ltd,
email: jamesr@steptwo.com.au, <www.steptwo.com.au>

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A day in the life of a back-of-book indexer…

The ACT Region Branch's meeting on 22 June featured a panel of back-of-book indexers who discussed their approach to indexing tasks. Lynn Farkas chaired the meeting, introducing the three members of the Registration Panel – Michael Harrington, Barry Howarth and Jean Norman – who had agreed to share their expertise. Lynn chose a question and answer format, to which the three speakers and audience members could respond.

Starting out

How did they get started in indexing? Michael worked at the Australian Government Printing Service (AGPS), and set up an indexing system for the *Commonwealth Gazette*, then realised there were other works that needed indexes. Barry and Jean both worked at the Australian National University (ANU) and offered to compile an index for an academic text. This influences the way they work, which may be different from the way indexers with a background in librarianship approach an indexing task.

Working hours

How long do you work? Jean works business hours with breaks, but if the work and deadlines require, will work seven-day weeks if necessary. Barry adopts much the same approach. Michael's hours are dictated by the work – he works 'full on' if he has to, and can even work on concurrent indexes if necessary. (Lynn noted some parallels with database indexing, where one is required to work on different topics simultaneously.)

All three agreed that you have to 'keep the text in your head' while working on it.

Reading through the text

There are two schools of thought about whether to read through once or twice before starting to compile an index. Michael reads through twice, picking up concepts and topics the first time, and refining them the second time. Barry takes notes or highlights key concepts and topics on the first read through, before entering them in his indexing software. Michael noted that your individual approach depends on how you were taught. He taught himself and doesn't highlight.

And if the book is really boring? All three panel members said you get interested as you go along, and you just get on with the job. Michael added that there was pleasure in constructing a good index. Multi-author works are always a challenge.

Several audience members offered slightly different perspectives, but were in general accord with panel members' views.

Specialised knowledge

How much specialised knowledge do you need? Michael said that common sense is necessary in any circumstance. If the book was meant for lay readers, non-specialists should be able to index it. Jean argued that indexing was a question of analysis, which can be done with general knowledge and common sense. There is also a moral issue of providing a competent index. If the topic is outside your general knowledge, morally you should not agree to do the index.

Again, audience members offered slightly different perspectives. Indexing is about making the content accessible and if you index books without fully understanding the content, you may need to verify entries with the author(s). Sometimes it is best to leave technical works to those with the expert knowledge.

Lynn compared this with database indexing, where you have time for background reading, and are helped by the source and by controlled vocabulary.

Business management

Why would you turn down a job? The only reasons would be lack of time, previous commitments, or that you had had dealings with the client before and not been paid. You may know a job will be a problem but take it on anyway. Contacts come from authors occasionally, but more often from publishers, editors and other intermediaries. In commercial work there may be space limits, e.g. eight pages for the index, but this can sometimes be queried and changed.

The panel members all noted that estimating the costs of preparing an index can be difficult. Michael estimates in hours, but can't always be 100% accurate. The general consensus was five pages per hour for academic texts, 10-12 pages for annual reports and the like, although some parts of such reports can be done at 15-20 pages an hour. Michael regards a quote as binding, but others said they would charge for hours worked over the quote. Michael uses templates for quotes and invoices.

The panel members all use dedicated indexing software, and consult reference tools like dictionaries or websites to verify facts or names.

Acknowledgements

The *Style Manual* recommends that indexers, as well as editors, should be acknowledged in the preface, but that is not always appropriate. Lynn noted that many indexers do not want their work to be acknowledged, particularly if the integrity of an index is compromised by time or space constraints.

Indexers often get no direct feedback about an index, and the only feedback might be when a client offers you another index to do.

Consistency and quality

Lynn commented that the skills required for database indexing seem different, although in both kinds of indexing you clearly have to think how the user is going to look at the index. One member of the audience with experience in both back-of-book and database indexing indicated that both types of indexing require the same sort of mindset and the same skills.

The final question was, how do you know if an index is good? There was general agreement from panel and audience members that the quality of an index is determined by whether or not you can find what you are looking for.

We all learned a great deal from this session, and the variety of backgrounds of those present ensured an interesting discussion. The Branch hopes to run a similar meeting on 'A day in the life of a database indexer' later in the year.

Edyth Binkowski
Secretary ACT Region Branch

The Proceedings of the ANZSI Conference, Melbourne, 18–19 March, 2005 will be available in September 2005 for $50.00

Discount price for prepublication orders received by 1 September 2005 is only $40.00

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