

From the President



Let me start by wishing a very warm 'Welcome Back' to all you renewing members – it is great to have your continuing support to the Society through your membership and subscriptions.

I recently received a letter from a member asking why they should renew their membership. Compared with their membership of an editor's society, they found that our Society didn't provide the same monthly meetings attended by large groups, where they could pick up work that others could not handle. So, what were the benefits to them?

I found this question hard to answer, because of course what this person said was true. We are a very small society of about 250 members, even with the recent addition of our New Zealand colleagues. Our largest branch has about 80 members – other larger societies attract this many people, and more, to simple meetings. Most of our branches offer quarterly rather than monthly activities for members – few of the executive committees have the time to do more. And although many of us are 'flat out' with work, it is not a common part of indexing for indexers to 'farm out' excess work – that is the prerogative of the publisher or client. So what could I answer?

I brought the question to the ANZSI Executive, because it is important that every society takes a regular look at what it is and what it does. So I asked them: 'What do we offer members? What are the benefits to belonging to ANZSI? What are our purposes, and our goals?'

After quite a long and soul-searching discussion, we reaffirmed the following basic concepts about ANZSI membership.

- First, our reason for being. We are a body of people who share the same interest and wish to extend this interest both by interaction with others, and by promoting this interest to others who might benefit from it. Please note that this basic concept doesn't include anything about finding work. We are *not* an employment agency, and that has never been the prime consideration of our Society. We *do* recognise that many of our members are engaged in indexing to earn a living, and we support these endeavours by publishing *Indexers Available*, our directory of freelance indexers who are looking for work. But it is more important for the Society to promote indexing and indexers than to find members work.

What are the benefits of ANZSI membership? ... support, self-development, professionalism, networking, interaction and association with quality.

- Our goal is to further the professionalism of our members, and the reputation of our profession. To this end, we offer our Registration, a peer review system that promotes a basic standard of quality in indexing. In the absence of a formal academic course of study through our tertiary education system, we believe our Registration has come to be a benchmark against which indexers evaluate their work, and which potential clients can use as assurance of general quality. Over the years, our most experienced indexers have given their time to serve as chairs or members of the Registration Panel, and the comments and advice they provide to those who submit indexes for registration are an invaluable benefit of membership.

- We encourage interaction with other members, through Branch activities and our biennial conferences. Our conferences are internationally recognised as being of a high standard, and are regularly attended by indexers from other countries. Our Branch

activities tend to be a bit more variable, depending on the size of the Branch, the number of volunteers serving on Branch committees, and the internal and external business of the Society that the Branches are involved in (for example, the NSW Branch Committee has taken on all the redevelopment work for our website, which has limited the time they have for arranging general Branch activities). Sometimes, those not involved in committees don't realise the amount of work that is undertaken on behalf of the membership – the word 'Committee' doesn't contain the root 'commit' for nothing!

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Deadline for September issue: 26 August

Newsletter, Webmaster and Registration contacts

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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

26 August for the September 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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Cost: A\$35 for ANZSI members

Registration

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or <www.aussi.org/profissues/
registration.html>

Indexers Available

<www.aussi.org/IndexersAvailable>

Someone *will* edit the newsletter!

Clodagh Jones has volunteered to take it on, so your September newsletter will be produced in Tasmania. For this issue only, contributions should go to Clodagh at <jonec@netspace.net.au> and the deadline is 26 August. Do **not** send them to Peter Judge – he'll be away, but he returns in time for the October issue.

News from the New Zealand Branch

The New Zealand Branch initiated its Mentoring Scheme this month. The first mentee, David Mitchell from Nelson, will be starting soon and two more mentees are in the pipeline. We are still looking for more registered indexers to step forward and help us – currently we have one mentor, Tordis Flath.

A Branch library has been approved and books and publications are being collected for lending out to Branch members. Jill Gallop has taken on the role of Branch librarian.

The Northern Group is planning another Speakers' Meeting at the end of August, hopefully given by the Genealogy Society.

The Branch has developed and implemented the use of electronic meetings. This allows the committee to function via email agendas and responses which result in our minutes. We have been fine tuning this and it is now running well.

We are currently organising some indexing training courses in Hamilton and Auckland for the end of August – early September, with Max McMaster as trainer. Course organisers are Kathryn Mercer, Hamilton and Lynne Cobine, Auckland.

Kathryn Mercer was notified that she had been awarded the 2005 ANZSI Conference sponsorship. Congratulations Kathryn.

Tordis Flath, President

(from the President, continued from page 1)

- While it has never been codified, I believe an underlying assumption of our Society has been 'self help'. We encourage, advise, mentor and train prospective indexers. We share knowledge and experience. We aren't daunted by big ideas, or big tasks. When ACT Branch members hold joint meetings with ACT editors, they outnumber us in bodies, but are always amazed at the range and depth of the activities we are engaged in.

It is this culture of self help that, for me, answers the question: what are the benefits of ANZSI membership? I believe the benefits are what you make them. Sure we have Committees to guide the development of the Society, but it is up to the members to initiate, not just respond to, activities. Ask any Society member who has been involved with organising one of our conferences or workshops and they will tell you that it is time-consuming, difficult, harrowing, frustrating, worrying – but incredibly rewarding.

Last month I reported on the ACT Branch's newspaper indexing project –

this is not being driven by the Branch, it is being driven by the commitment of those participating.

This month you will see a note in this newsletter from Edyth Binkowski, who has volunteered to survey members about the indexing software packages they use. This is in response to a query she was sent by a new member, and Edyth took it upon herself to get this particular ball rolling. These initiatives weren't dictated, they evolved from the interests and concerns of members.

So what are the benefits of ANZSI membership? I can only trot out the old tried and true clichés: support, self-development, professionalism, networking, interaction and association with quality. They may be clichés, but they still work. The benefits are there for those who put in the time to reap them – it is up to you to get your money's worth. But tell us what you think – and win a book voucher! See page 6 ...

Lynn Farkas, ANZSI President

From the literature and other thoughts

Key Words, various issues on 'How do I index thee?'

A two-part series on indexers' processes published in *Key Words* is available on the ASI website <www.indexers.org.uk>. In the first article (*Key Words* v. 12, no. 2, April–June 2004), Kari Kells, Janet Perlman, Cathy Martz and Sherry Smith each explain the steps they take in indexing – e.g. scanning the table of contents, marking up, checking entries, and editing chapter by chapter or at the end. In the second part (*Key Words* v. 12, no. 4, Oct–Dec 2004), Cheryl Landes, Kathy Sychra, Seth Maislin and Cher Paul follow the same pattern. Topics include embedded indexes, where you work (e.g. in planes), printing files, and drawing mind maps of relationships between topics. An indexer might take different approaches for different sorts of books, e.g. textbooks versus scholarly books.

In response to the first article, Robert Saigh wrote a letter to the editor (*Key Words* v. 12, no. 3, July–Sept 2004) saying that with the threats of offshoring of indexing work he was astonished to see an article about such labour-intensive indexing. This was followed up with his article 'Index or perish' in *Key Words* v. 12, no. 4, Oct–Dec 2004, in which he writes about his indexing process. He drills through the text, first indexing chapter heads, then text heads and any subheads. He then starts again and indexes any italicised or boldfaced terms, along with tables, figures and authors' names if they have been requested. If there is any space left in the index he then 'attacks the text'. He says that this process would 'not be a cakewalk for a beginner', but that after twenty-five years of indexing he can index in his sleep. (When I do this I know I'm overstressed!)

Robert's approach is an ideal method for creating indexes to well-structured books. I have used this method for school textbooks, for example. But we still need other approaches for complex works which are not structured with chapter sections and bolded terms.

Bulletin of ASIST v. 31, no. 4, April/May 2005

Jeanette Ezzo studied a graduate course in thesaurus construction at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her final report for the course, focusing on her approach as an adult learner, has been published in the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* <www.asis.org/Bulletin/Apr-05/ezzo.html>. The title of the article, which starts 'Bella and Yakov and Tillie's Panties' is derived from the mnemonic used by anatomy students to remember the bones of the wrist.

The web as the death of language?

Linguists often get unfairly blamed for trying to control language, just as librarians get blamed for focussing on silence and safe storage.

Wired News (<http://wired-vig.com/news/culture/01284,66671,00.html>) has a report on a presentation at the American Academy for the Advancement of Science annual meeting by David Crystal, an author and linguistics professor at the University of Wales. He said that 'the prophets of doom emerge every time a new technology influences language', and that linguists should be 'exulting' at the ability the internet gives us to 'explore the

power of the written language in a creative way'. One finding was that 70% of college students who answered a questionnaire did something else (e.g. word processing, watching television) while they were involved in instant messaging. This does not surprise me, as my son, Bill, seems to think he can do his homework while chatting online to his friends!

eContent Mag

eContent Mag has an article by Bob Doyle advocating book-style web indexes ('I Column Like I CM: Your Site—from A to Z', <www.econtentmag.com/Articles/ArticleReader.aspx?ArticleID=8212>). He writes: 'An index is like a taxonomy, but you don't have to integrate it into a powerful and expensive metadata-enhanced search engine. You just offer a site index, in addition to the usual site map. Think of the site map as your table of contents and the index as your, well, index.'

Technical writers work habits survey

Melanie Doulton has presented the results of a 2004 survey on the work habits of technical writers at <www.geocities.com/mad_vox/Work-Habits-Survey-Results-July05.pdf>. It was also published in the Society of Technical Communicators India Chapter newsletter, *Indus*, May–June 2005. She found that most of the writers surveyed worked in geographically distributed teams, had few support staff (editors, illustrators and indexers), and had high job satisfaction.

Glenda Browne

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'.

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 be 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>

Johnson—the man and his dictionary

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the first publication of a very special dictionary, Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language*, on 15 April 1755.

Who was this man Johnson, and why was his dictionary so special? It was by no means the first English dictionary, nor even the most comprehensive—Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730) had 48,000 entries in its first edition and 60,000 in the second, compared with Johnson's 43,000—but it set a benchmark that was not surpassed anywhere in the world for centuries. (For comparison, the *OED on CD-ROM 2002* has 290,500 main entries.)

Samuel Johnson (1709–84) was the son of a bookseller in Lichfield, in the English Midlands. He was a sickly boy but an early and voracious reader, and when in 1728 he went up to Pembroke College, Oxford, he astonished his tutor with his knowledge of obscure Latin poets. However, he lived there in relative poverty and left without a degree after a little more than a year.

He next tried his hand at school teaching, but found it uncongenial. At the age of 26 he married a widow 20 years his senior, whom he found 'both attractive and intelligent'. With her marriage settlement he opened his own school, but this, too, soon proved a failure and they left for London in 1737. Meanwhile he was busily writing poetry, prose, a play, biographies of personalities of the day and a range of political satires. He also collaborated in a library catalogue and helped an old friend from Lichfield to prepare *A Medicinal Dictionary*.

What prompted this new English dictionary? Italians, French, Spaniards, Germans and Russians had all produced standard dictionaries of their languages. A need was widely felt in early 18th century England for a similar dictionary 'for fixing the English language, as the French and Italian'. Several well-known literary figures talked about compiling such a dictionary, but it remained just talk until 1746. Then a consortium of five London booksellers and publishers asked Johnson to do it. He prepared a 34-page *Short Scheme for the Compiling of a New Dictionary of the English Language*, and a contract based on this scheme was signed on 18 June. Across the Channel the French Academy had 40 distinguished scholars toiling for 40 years on a similar project—how could Johnson possibly complete the work single-handed in his projected 3 years? His characteristic reply: '40 times 40 is 1600. As 3 is to 1600, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.' In the end it took him nine years, but the French scholars took 55, with a further 18 for revisions.

Johnson hired six scribes and set to work. From a mountain of books he amassed what we would now call a corpus of literature. This covered mainly the period starting with Sir Philip Sidney (about 1580) but Chaucer and some other earlier writers were included wherever he saw the need. He selected words from these books by underlining the key word

in passages that he marked with vertical lines in the margin. His scribes copied the passages, which became the 118,000 illustrative quotations, and then returned them to Johnson to work on the definitions. All sources were scrupulously acknowledged.

Johnson began work thinking he was to 'fix' the language (as the French Academy was doing), but as he progressed he recognised from his examples of actual usage that meaning 'is determined by consensus, not fiat'. His fee of £1,575, worth about \$400,000 today, was not enough to support himself and his scribes throughout this time. He sought the patronage of Lord Chesterfield, who offered a paltry £10 but later tried to claim a dedication. Johnson showed his feelings in his famous definition of *patron*: 'Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery', and remained independent, supplementing his fee with the many other projects that he undertook in parallel. In 1752 he suffered the death of his much-loved wife; he never remarried.

As the dictionary neared publication, Oxford gave him an honorary MA, just in time to print it on the title page. The first edition appeared in two large volumes at £4.10s, but this high price resulted in slow sales—even when offered in 165 sixpenny parts! So Johnson prepared an abridgement in two smaller volumes, omitting the quotations. This sold well, averaging 1000 copies a year for the next 30 years, and for the first time a dictionary was becoming an essential part of every literate home. There were four revisions, and over the next fifty years editions were published in Dublin, Edinburgh, Philadelphia and even Heidelberg.

Johnson was famous but impoverished, but this changed when in 1762 the British government awarded him a life pension of £300 a year, 'not for any thing you are to do, but for what you have done'. However, financial security did not stop him writing and his next major publication, in 1765, was an 8-volume annotated edition of Shakespeare. In that same year he received an honorary Doctor of Laws from Trinity College, Dublin, and in 1775 a similar doctorate from Oxford.

His definitions are not always quite right: *Pastern*, 'the knee of a horse', for example, he admitted was wrong from 'pure ignorance'. *Oats*, 'a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people', sounds thoroughly racist but may be no more than his barbed wit. You would be hard put to visualise a *Network* from 'Anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections.' But in the main he is clear and very precise as to the meanings of even common words—*take* is given 113 numbered senses as a transitive verb and 21 more as intransitive! The *OED* still uses some 1800 of Johnson's definitions, marked 'J.'

Although not setting out to 'fix' the language, the dictionary gives us a unique insight into the language of the



day and how it has changed—for example, a *cadger* was then an honest peasant who brought eggs, butter and poultry from the country to the market; a *shirt* was the ‘under linen garment of a man’. Johnson was a devout Anglican and careful about which morally correct authors to consult and which words to include (although there are some notable, probably unintended, omissions such as *literary*). Purely vulgar words, like *piss*, *fart* and *turd* were allowed, but he left out the ‘naughty’ words. And when two ladies commended him on this, he replied, ‘What, my dears! Then you have been looking for them?’

These were the very early days of etymology, although a theoretical Indo-European language had already been proposed as the possible ancestor of many our languages. Johnson occasionally made wild and improbable guesses at word origins or, as in the case of *skilt* (from its context, probably a poetic variant of *skilled*), said frankly, ‘I know not either the etymology nor the meaning of this word’.

Football and *cricket*, *tea* and *coffee*, are there. *Snuggle* is a good word, but *cuddle* is ‘low’ (‘not suited to dignified writing’). There are many scientific terms, more perhaps than you might have expected, from *atom* to *zoophyte*—but remember, the Royal Society of London had by now been going strong for almost a century. Its Fellows, such as Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, John Ray and John Quincy, all contributed much to the corpus.

And how did Johnson himself see his great work? On the one hand, with self-deprecating modesty: he defines *lexicographer* as ‘a maker of dictionaries, a harmless drudge.’ In

his Preface he admits to ‘a few wild blunders, and risible absurdities’, but hopes that some will recognise its value: ‘no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication some words are budding and some falling away’. On the other hand, he was always rather pleased with himself about it. Boswell once suggested, ‘You did not know what you were undertaking.’ To which Johnson answered, ‘Yes, Sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking—and very well how to do it—and have done it very well.’ A self-appraisal richly supported by the judgement of posterity.

Peter Judge

Reprinted from *The Canberra Editor*, v. 14, no.3, April 2005.

Sources: Selections from Johnson’s dictionary by E L McAdam and George Milne, Papermac 1982, and by Jack Lynch, Levenger Press/Atlantic Books 2004. Also, the articles on ‘Samuel Johnson’ and ‘Dictionaries’ in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica on DVD 2005*.

Uncommon immigrant

You can promote indexing in strange places and at strange times. Returning from overseas last month, for the sake of variety I filled in my occupation on the immigration form as ‘Indexer’ instead of my usual ‘Librarian’ or ‘Retired’. When I reached Customs, the officer was vastly intrigued and asked me, what does an indexer do? What training do you need? How does that relate to librarianship? He thought it sounded an interesting job. And meanwhile the queue behind me grew longer and longer...

Geraldine Triffitt

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Computer indexing programs survey

Following the ACT Region Branch's recent function on 'A Day in the Life of a Back-of-book Indexer', which I reported in the last newsletter, a reader emailed to ask what computer indexing programs were used. This was something that was not discussed, though to the best of my knowledge all three of our panel members, and some audience members, use these programs.

I undertook to conduct a survey of the use of computer indexing programs, such as Cindex or Macrex, and feel that the newsletter is a good forum for such a survey.

There is no reason to confine the survey to ACT members, so I am inviting any ANZSI members who use them to let me know:

- (1) Which computer indexing program do you use, and why did you choose this one?
- (2) If you use more than one, which programs do you use for which types of indexes?

Please email me at <geoffb@webone.com.au> or phone me on +61 2 6281 2484. When I have a good and (hopefully!) representative selection of responses, I will report the results in a future newsletter.

Edyth Binkowski
ACT Region Branch secretary

Get me a UK indexer – QUICK!

Indexers Available, the British Society's directory of professional indexers, can already be consulted on the Society's website <www.indexers.org.uk>, where it is regularly updated. Now, however, *Indexers Available* is being issued in CD-ROM format, replacing the former printed version.

The directory of indexers is searchable by name, subject/skill/media specialisms and postcode. There is other useful information for anyone commissioning an index: general advice, more specific guidelines on fees, recommended practices, moral rights and a sample contract. There are examples of reviewers' comments on good or bad indexes, and a section on professional recognition and awards for indexing. The CD-ROM also contains the Society's publications *Authors and Indexes – DIY or Hire a Professional* and *Last but not Least* in pdf format, and details of other available publications.

Indexers Available on CD-ROM is fully searchable and includes (of course) an index.

Michèle Clarke, Chairman of the Society of Indexers, says: 'Every editor should have this on his or her desktop'.

*Society of Indexers, Blades Enterprise Centre,
John Street, Sheffield S2 4SU*

(The ANZSI equivalent is available only online. Find it at:
<www.aussi.org/IndexersAvailable>)

Taxonomies

Yes, this does seem to be the buzzword of the moment. The NSW Committee would like to hear from any members who would be interested in attending a workshop, discussion group or panel, and/or any one who has had experience in this field and would be willing to impart some of their knowledge in either a formal or informal forum.

There are growing opportunities in the Australian online publishing environment for people with indexing experience to move into this area. So let us know what you think about this.

Some quotes which emphasise the importance of taxonomies in today's online environment:

- We are now past the point where aggregators and database hosting operators question the role of taxonomical analysis and structure: indeed, the best of their customers expect a taxonomy service alongside existing service values and, for increasing numbers, use of such taxonomy environments is vital to the understanding of internal content in the context of external information acquisitions.

David Worlock *EPS Insights*, 1/7/2005

- Taxonomies, classification, categorization—helping users find actionable information that is buried in today's huge repositories of enterprise information is a vital business imperative. Built and implemented effectively, a taxonomy or categorization scheme is the secret to navigating Web sites and internal data collections, thereby ensuring that users find precise answers to their search queries.

Planned 'Boot Camp' on Taxonomies, 27-28/9/2005, NY.

- A taxonomic system organises information in a way that allows links to be established between relevant content so that the information can be retrieved in an intuitive way ... interest has grown across the board as more and more companies face a growing body of unstructured information and increasing levels of corporate governance.

Rebecca Cliffe *EPS Insights* 16/6/2005

Please contact Madeleine Davis (NSW Branch Secretary) at <mdavis@austlii.edu.au> or phone +61 2 9514 3176.

Why are you a member of ANZSI?

In her President's column Lynn Farkas discussed all kinds of motives and benefits that members might have in joining the Society. But what about you? Have Lynn's words made you think, 'That's it! That's exactly why I have just renewed my subscription.' Or did you have quite different reasons for joining, and do you feel that you have enjoyed quite different benefits.

Write in and tell us. There will be a book voucher for the best letter or email to <president@aussi.org>.

Don't forget, it's your newsletter!

But it's only as good as its contributions, and *you* are the contributors. We hope you enjoyed the article on Johnson and his dictionary, but that was just popped in to fill some empty space. We'd much rather you filled it with news, views and information of greater direct relevance to the Society... And that includes 'Letters to the editor'!

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

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