THIRD MEETING FOR 1980

Wednesday, 17th September, 7.30 p.m.
at CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne

Committee Room, Third Floor

Miss Josephine McGovern, BA, ALA
Librarian, Parliament of Victoria,
will relate her impressions of 'Indexers in a World of Change'
Theme of the Society of Indexers' Conference
at Newnham College, Cambridge, 11-13 July.
OFFICE BEARERS, 1980

President: Peter H. Dawe, Chief Librarian, CSIRO, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne, 3002

Vice-President: Winifred Mills, 45 Edwards Avenue, Garden City, 3207

Hon. Secretary: Jean Hagger, Unit 4, 2 Erne Street, Mont Albert, 3127

Hon. Treasurer: Joyce Korn, Librarian, Australian Society of Accountants, 49 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, 3000

Committee: Clyde Garrow; Coryl Muntz; John Simkin
ROBERT DAVID WILLIAMSON
1917 - 1980

In a world of "Two Cultures" Bob Williamson was a man who was able to move easily in both. He was a Renaissance man in every sense - engineer, writer, humanitarian, informaticist, devoted churchman, loving husband and father. He had an understanding of our world and of life which gave him a faith in its ultimate rationality and a wisdom and calmness which affected all he contacted; moreover he was a completely unassuming and humble person.

After his early education at Melbourne High School he trained as a chemical engineer. Service in the AIF in World War II followed and on return to civilian life he joined APM Ltd. He gave distinguished service to that Company and to the field of paper technology, being awarded the Insignia Award in Technology of the City and Guilds of London Institute. His many interests included Australian editorship of Pulp and Paper International, Chairmanship of the RACI Committee on Scientific and Technical Information, membership of the Library Association of Australia and the Australian Writers Guild and he was an Elder in the Uniting Church of Australia.

Bob was convinced that the application of technology to the field of information would yield great benefits to the Australian community and to the scientific and technological and industry sectors in particular. This conviction was strengthened by his service in the STISEC Secretariat. He became first chairman of the LAA Information Science Section and was a pioneer in the establishment of computer-readable information services in Australia. After early retirement from APM Ltd. he joined Grisha Sklovsky and Frank Nicholls in establishing Transknowledge Associates as a pioneer in information broking in Australia.

In the information field Bob had vision of an Australia where the importance of this resource was understood and appreciated throughout the community. This vision included the bringing together of all the professionals involved particularly librarians and information scientists. He was acutely aware of the difficulties of achieving this goal but undeterred he cheerfully set about the task both at the professional level in the LAA/ISS Group and at the national level. His calm logic, unfailing optimism and warm and genuine friendliness left an indelible mark on all whom he encountered.

Members of the Society will recall with pleasure the talk he gave after his return from the overseas visit which he undertook on his retirement. He reviewed developments in information technology and stressed the importance of education of users and marketing of services if wide community acceptance of the products of the new technology was to be achieved. It is therefore appropriate that this issue of the Newsletter includes a review of his publication Recipe Book Service of On-line Searching which aims at just this objective. We join with Bob's family and his many friends in so many walks of life in mourning his death, but we pay tribute to a really fine person who contributed so much in so many ways and who left something of himself with all whom he contacted. Vale Robert David Williamson.

C. Garrów
9/5/80
REPORTS OF MEETINGS

The first meeting of the Society this year, on 19th March (at CSIRO East Melbourne) gave members and a large number of visitors a stimulating overview of the International Food Information Service (IFIS). Mr Ernest Mann, Director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Dairy Science and Technology at Shinfield, Berks., and one of the two Managing Directors of IFIS, was guest speaker. In the midst of a whirlwind international tour sampling both food and information, we were indeed fortunate that a few hours in Melbourne could be arranged.

He began by outlining the genesis of IFIS - founded in 1968 as a collaborative venture by CAB (the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux) with AIT (the American Institute of Food Technologists), IDW (Institut für Dokumentationwesen, West Germany) and PUDOC (Centre for Agricultural Publishing and Documentation, The Netherlands) as principal partners of the consortium. The Committee of Management comprises two representatives from each body, with joint Managing Directors, one British, the other German.

Food Science and Technology Abstracts are produced by the Service both in the form of monthly journal issues and machine-readable tapes since 1973. The data base is available on-line to users in Germany, Italy and USA, and off-line in 13 other countries. Particular attention is paid to coverage of journals in languages other than English, with the help of institutions in various countries - e.g. Japan. Half the content comes from about 100 core journals. FSTA comprise:

82.65% relevant articles from primary journals published in 75 countries
13.95% patents from 20 countries
1.39% standards literature from 39 countries
2.01% book reviews.

Original languages of the above material are: English, 50%; German, 15.63%; Russian, 9.78%; with French and Japanese predominant in the remainder.

Material from centres throughout the world is received by the Editorial Office of IFIS at the Commonwealth Bureau of Dairy Science. A surprisingly small but obviously most efficient staff is responsible for scanning the bulk of the input, preparing abstracts, indexing and editing. Input forms are sent on completion to the IFIS unit in the Zentralstelle für Maschinelle Dokumentation at Frankfurt for computer processing. Because of the time factor in any abstracting service, ideally production should be located in one place, but the system is well integrated. Scientists in the Systems Group deal with any errors needing specialized knowledge; and also control the sequential release of records for inclusion in the journal. A serial authority file is used to detect duplication of records. Readers in the printing firm (which also does the keyboarding) are provided with a high quality proof listing. Issues are dispatched from the Editorial Office to subscribers throughout the world.

Speaking about indexing procedures (all too briefly) Mr Mann said they aimed to use maximum machine effort to save time in intellectual activity. Entries are coded on to input forms, using a controlled headings list. This is based on commodities and aspects terms, manipulated by consistent rules. He showed some examples, and for comparison, the headings used in Dairy Science Abstracts. Naturally there is some overlap of relevant abstracts in these publications; index terms can be stated differently in context with the scope of each journal. Nevertheless the old precept of "keep it simple and consistent" is maintained by the indexers, who must have a good background knowledge of their topic.
After a short question time, Mr Mann called upon Dr. Grahame Jackson of CSIRO Central Information Service, to demonstrate retrieval from the data base. With his usual deft touch Grahame logged in first with OTC MIDAS (Multimode Data Acquisition Service) then to FSTA on Lockheed's DIALOG service in USA, obviously supplying the right answers to the computer's conversation. Using several topics suggested from the audience, he showed how these could be expanded or qualified, depending upon the user's interests on seeing the references displayed on the terminal - and the number of records retrieved. It was a most interesting example of successful culmination of all the background input organization described by Mr Mann. We are grateful to C.I.L.E.S. for providing the opportunity of seeing this sophisticated equipment in action.

In thanking Mr Mann, Mr Bob Croll commended him on a splendid contribution to the management of IFIS, whose operation is a valuable example of international collaboration. He paid tribute to the CAB journals "supreme in the world for access to agricultural literature." The President, Mr Peter Dawe, supported these remarks; saying that our distinguished guest, assisted by Grahame Jackson, had given the Society's activities a flying start for 1980.

On 18th June some 15 members braved a typical Melbourne winter evening to meet at the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, in St. Kilda Road. Mrs Margaret Fialides, Manager of Communication Services and her enthusiastic colleagues gave us a fascinating glimpse of a most vital area of information transfer. She provided a most comprehensive tour, showing ways of transforming the written word for those who cannot see it. Since its inception in 1866 the Institute has lead the way in teaching and implementing all possible means of education and communication.

The Kurzwell machine is one of the most recent developments. This emits a low pitched 'voice', i.e. a pattern of electronically produced sound, in response to identification of syllables on the printed page laid upon the receiving screen; all by means of a complex array of circuitry. The human ear adapts surprisingly quickly to an initially curious inflection; but apart from some practical constraints - like page size, the programmed vocabulary, there are limits to the number of users.

The talking book service now has over 2000 readers, apart from those using the tape recording service. From two students ten years ago there would now be about 130 mostly at tertiary level, in addition to a larger number using the facility in continuing postgraduate work. Especially for those trying to keep up with a syllabus, a reliable and contemporary access to texts and reference works, intelligently recorded, is the basic essential. All the recording and playing equipment is maintained, repaired and often specifically modified by members of the section - with interest, accuracy and a rate of turn round probably unknown in the commercial world. Likewise the work of copying tapes, which are available on a reel to reel or cassette from the master recording. The facility of finding a particular part of a dissertation by means of signals in the fast-forward mode is included.

Naturally, readers are expected to be familiar with the subjects they record, and use a consistent system of stating chapters, pages, footnotes, figures etc. On four track tapes, the title, with tape and track numbers are stated at the beginning of each new track, together with contents of the previous track. An index sheet is also completed by the reader for every tape.

A library catalogue is maintained and a general subject index. The many facets of the system are obviously integrated with awareness of a vital part in living communication. This was also evident in the demonstration of maps and diagrams with features discernable by touch. Raised lines and an ingenious use of fabrics and materials with perceptibly distinct textures can also help someone to discover the layout of a building or university campus.

An interval with individual questions and answers, fortified by delicious refreshments, was yet another aspect of hospitality much appreciated by all.
During the past decade, facilities for retrospective bibliographic searching have been enhanced by the vast cobweb growth of computer networks. An increasing number of documentation authorities are using these systems for accessible storage of publication records with author and subject as the minimum fields of retrieval.

Statistics showing world-wide production of machine-readable data bases were cited by Clyde Garrow in 1977 (Newsletter 1 no. 4). The largest contribution is still from U.S.A., which includes DIALOG and ORBIT, with TYMNET extending to Europe; while AUSINET and CSIRONET are now well known locally.

The growing number of information service and library personnel with direct commitments to quick recall of references to their special fields of interest will find the Recipe Book a useful tool in setting about computer terminal procedures for logging into six international services. It should be a vade mecum for those who are not constantly operating a keyboard.

The Introduction points out that each supplier uses different commands for the same actions. A clear format leads the reader step by step through each routine. The value of preliminary familiarity with the chosen system is obvious. - "The Australian researcher's time represents about one fifth the cost of interrogating a U.S. data base." Search costs can be reduced by learning to exploit variations in techniques. Some practical comments are made about adequate preparation of explicit search concepts and terms; including consultation with the originator and any relevant thesauri.

This compact but durable looseleaf handbook allows subscribers to replace updated pages as they are issued. The Service does not attempt to evaluate files available on the networks described, but does name the elementary search aids they provide. Data bases available from AUSINET and CSIRONET (the latter for current searches) are listed. The much greater array offered by the overseas services would be an attractive addition to the next update.

The last section of the manual is a glossary - we quote some entries. GLOSSARY of selected terms and abbreviations of interest to on-line information practitioners

Accessions list
A listing of material acquired by an information centre.

Acronym
A set of characters, usually a pronounceable word, formed from, usually, the first one or two letters in each word of a phrase, name or description.

Algorithm
An expression of the stepwise procedure by which a problem may be solved.

Control terminal
Any computer terminal used to input instructions to control the central device.

Controlled vocabulary
A limited list of terms used to index material for storage and retrieval.
Conversational mode
Communication between a computer and user by which the computer responds to the user in real time, permitting the user to carry out an extended dialog.

CRT
Cathode ray tube. An electronic device used to display characters or graphics, usually from information stored in a computer.

Data bank
Usually synonymous with Data base and File.

Descriptor
A word or phrase applied to a document relating to some aspect of its content. Also termed keyword.

Data Base
A comprehensive computerised file of information in a structured form.

Explosion
A technique of examining the group of words of similar alphabetical form (or STEM). The searcher requests terms related to the chosen terms.

File
A collection of selected information structured for storage and retrieval.

Floppy disc (Sometimes spelt DISK)
One form of magnetic storage of computer information capable of storing up to about 60 pages of text per disc.

Free Vocabulary
In an indexing system, the words chosen with little or no control of synonyms, homographs or other terms and without a display of relationships between terms.

Homograph
One word with two or more unrelated and dissimilar meanings. This poses serious problems in use of the word as a keyword in computer searching.

Interface
The area separating or connecting two systems.

Keyword
A significant word, usually selected as an indexing term or descriptor. Sometimes refers to a key term or phrase. See also Descriptor.

Random Access
The availability to select the desired item from computer storage without having to search sequentially the storage file.

Subject specialist
In an information service, a person experienced or qualified in library-type operations with a comprehensive understanding of the technical aspects of subjects of interest to the ultimate users of the information sought.

Surrogate
Material which is adequate for most purposes to illustrate or substitute for another material, e.g. an entry in a catalogue is a surrogate for the document to which it refers.
Terminal equipment
Usually a keyboard sometimes in conjunction with a VDU
used in communicating with a computer.

Thesaurus
A selection of terms, arranged logically with specified
relationships. Often used in developing strategies for
searching data bases.

VDU
Visual display unit. Usually a CRT, sometimes wired in
conjunction with a typewriter type device for use as a
terminal.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

from Jean Hagger

Recently, I had two unfortunate experiences with 'author-
mutilated' indexes, which I would like to report to the members of
the Society.

I had commissions to prepare indexes to two works, each
edited by members of the staff of a noted academic institute and
published by two different commercial firms. (I mention the last
fact because I want to emphasize that the mutilations made to my
indexes were in no way the work of the publishers.) The works, and
their indexes were duly published. In approaching the editors to
inquire about getting copies for my own files, they mentioned that
they had made a number of alterations to my work.

I then checked the published versions against my drafts as
submitted and was horrified to find several examples of 'inconsistent
meddling with punctuation, capitals, indentation and other important
details'. Worst of all, in one work the editor had deleted some of
my headings, - certainly an acceptable exercise of her judgement, but
in doing so had left seven blind references; in the other work, one
was retained. Unfortunately my name appears as the indexer of the
first work; as for the second one, I can only be 'thankful for anonymity'.

Of course, I shall know next time. Meanwhile, I would urge
all indexers to:

include tracings of references on drafts submitted,
explaining the reason for this to the editor or author
preparing the final copy; then hope there will be no
blind references.

try to be given the job of proof reading your own work.
You may be able to convince an author or editor who has
flouted basic rules of indexing of the error of his/her
ways before the work goes into production.

invest in a copy of BS 3700:1976. This may help you
to establish your credibility if you find yourself at
odds with someone who is ignorant of even the basics
of indexing.

This letter is written more in anger than in sorrow, but I
hope it will be of interest and assistance to other members.

All the quotations above are from that excellent article by
M.D. Anderson, "Relations between authors and indexers" reprinted in
Indexers and Indexing, edited by L.M. Harrod. [Indexer 10:3 (1977)]
This letter demonstrates one facet of the iceberg that is contract indexing, and draws timely attention to the submerged reasons for the state of the art - on the whole, in local publishing. This event is particularly deplorable in that it was not the first time this indexer has undertaken work for that institution.

As the literate rear guard of book production, the indexer is well aware of editorial regard for the time factor in coordinating all aspects of the work. This priority varies with the editorial commitment to the text. An indexer may not realise that some people may have difficulty in visualizing the crystallization of subjects into alphabetical order until actually presented in that form. Perhaps only then will the level of communication in the initial specification and discussion be revealed - all too late for any reference to tracing notes or even Standards to come to the aid. Proof reading is essentially a typographic exercise: "corrections should be so far as possible confined to eliminating errors and ensuring that the copy has been accurately followed."* In this context, the indexer should certainly claim the responsibility of close scrutiny and checking of the proofs, and be, as the author, instantly available to do so.

Experience indicates that an indexer needs also to cultivate verbal skill in communication. By first creating the opportunity to read the text (even in edited manuscript) the indexer establishes a factual foundation for discussing the real problems that remain when the whole thing has been examined. Even more than in technical literature, this is important for conceptual works; much space can be devoted to an aspect of minor significance to the whole.

Enthusiasm and familiarity with the subject area may entice the indexer before the constraints are known. One should be aware of publishers' house rules and customs, no less than deadlines and costing arrangements. Allusion to the use of BS3700:1976 and any other relevant publications is enormously useful in establishing credibility and indeed, the status of a well-ordered project. Agreement upon what the potential readership needs may be a simple matter of accord in form and substance. In any case, time for presentation of a full draft (with expansions marked, if required) is reassuring for all. Any substantial index needs to be distributed and discussed by those concerned in committee. Few editors can resist the temptation to scan a small work, pen in hand, upon presentation. This is the moment to suggest acceptable condensations. There is an art in evaluating the relations of scholarship and remuneration to balance with mutual satisfaction.

* Style Manual ... Commonwealth Government Printing Office, Canberra 1966
INDEXES REVIEWED

by Brenda Miller

Seven Little Billabongs: the World of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant


It is unusual for an indexer's name to appear, but in this case it is a pleasure to be able to congratulate Frances O'Neill, as well as Melbourne University Press and the author, on this excellent index. It is comprehensive, including all the characters in the books of E.T. and M.G.B., which are mentioned in the text. It is easy to use because there are numerous sub-headings under the major entries, and one is thus able to locate easily the main events in the lives of the two authors, as well as their views on such subjects as religion, feminism and socialism. Last but not least, it is accurate. After a fairly exhaustive search I could find only one incorrect page reference.


It is sad to have to report that the index of this book is far from perfect, but such is the case.

There are numerous incorrect page references, one example of which will suffice. The first index reference for Albert Langer is to p125 but should be to p124. There are at least seven other mistakes of this kind, and probably many more. In addition to this inconsistencies can easily be found. The Monash Women's Society is indexed under 'Women', which the Monash Parents' Group, and the Monash Association of Students are both indexed under 'Monash'. Similarly the Currie Committee is indexed under 'Committee', while the Lindell Committee appears under 'Lindell'.

Little attempt has been made to index abstractions. For example although one chapter is headed 'Student Politics', and there are naturally many references to the student unrest of the late sixties and early seventies, I can find no index entry leading the reader to any of this, except possibly the heading 'Committee, Discipline', and two entries under 'Discipline'.

It is interesting that Lady Matheson who is mentioned many times, does not appear in the index, although the text of a talk she gave occupies a whole page of the text.

Let us have indexes, but please give us also indexes which are free from simple errors and inconsistencies.

DO YOU HOLD MY FIGHT FOR BIRTH CONTROL ??

Jennifer Challis reports a query directed to the State Library of Victoria by Dr Margaret Blackwood (University of Melbourne), who wished to know the names of libraries in Australia that hold copies of Margaret Sanger's autobiography, first published in 1931, entitled My Fight ... Eileen Palmer, one time secretary to the author, compiled an index, comprising some 12 pages of typescript, copies of which she would like to donate to any libraries holding the work.

Jennifer says "an index would be very useful, as Margaret Sanger met many feminists and people involved in radical politics before and after World War 1."

In a subsequent conversation, Dr Blackwood told our Hon. Sec. that Mrs Palmer spent a considerable period of time in India during the nineteen thirties, spreading the 'gospel' of family planning and birth control.
In response to Dr Blackwood's enquiry on behalf of her friend, who lives in England, names of the three libraries listed in NUCOM have been forwarded. Would members of the Society check other likely libraries and notify the Secretary of any finds?

BOOK REVIEWS - STATUS OF THE ART

From The Age, Melbourne

15th March, 1980. The Americans: Fifty Letters from America on our Life and Times; by Alistair Cooke (Bodley Head), reviewed by Prof. E.D. Potts. "There are a few mistakes (Methodists in the US number more than 100,000), and an index would doubtless improve the usefulness of the book."

12th April, 1980. The Royal Australian Engineers 1902-1919; by Ronald McNicoll (Corps Committee of the RAE), reviewed by Warren Perry. "... well illustrated with pictures and maps; it has an annotated list of Engineer Units of the 1st AIF, a useful bibliography, endnotes and an index. The book is good value ...

Working Women; compiled by Mary Owen and Sylvie Shaw (Sisters), reviewed by Caroline Egerton. "The book has a comprehensive bibliography and an index, making it a useful, even essential tool for anyone wishing to inform themselves of the current situation for women at work."

24th May, 1980. Modern Australian Poetry, 1920-1970; by Herbert C. Jaffa (Gale Research Co., Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan), reviewed by Nancy Keesing. "My chief complaint is a severe one. The index is as unreliable and inconsistent as are those from certain quality Australian presses that have prompted adverse comment in the past few years.

NEW INDEXES ESTABLISHED

The alert Index to CURRENT INFORMATION, compiled in the Parliamentary Library, Parliament House, Canberra announced in April this year the incorporation of a journal title index and a subject index into this publication. (ISSN 031-849X)

In Newsletter No. 66, (June 1980) the National Trust of Australia, Tasmania, the Editor commends Mr Peter Walker, of Hobart who has produced an Index of all past numbers to December 1979. Thirty copies will be type-printed and bound for distribution throughout the Trust.

The Editor of Modern Medicine of Australia (Dr John Ellard) has announced "From time to time we survey our readers to see how we can improve our publication. Many readers tell us that they tear out articles for future reference and then have no convenient way of filing them. [!!!...] A better solution is to provide a complete, detailed index to all the contents of Modern Medicine at the end of each year, so that those who have each issue will have ready access to all the contents. We have decided to do this: readers will receive their first annual index - to the material published in 1980 - at the end of this year."

PUBLICATIONS

The Society of Indexers Annual Report of the Council 1979-80. Membership is increasing by 7% annually; a total of 633, 56 of these overseas.

The Society of Indexers Newsletter, January and May 1980 issues.
The Society of Editors Newsletter, vol. 9 nos 6, 7 and 9 (Feb., Mar., May). In reviewing the FEAC Directory (Freelance Editors Association of Canada), 100pp., John Bagnold reveals "The Directory has four sections: alphabetical list of members; voting members; associate members; index to special skills and areas of knowledge. ... If you need someone who can translate Polish, or who has studied or is interested ... look up the index [which] occupies 14 pages."

IASC/SCAD Bulletin from the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada; vol. 3 no. 1 and 2. Amongst a wealth of very well presented news are brief articles on the expanded indexes to be included in the 1981 Canadiana (The National Bibliography); and A Checklist of Indexed Foreign Newspapers ... compiled by Mary Jane Starr, National Library of Canada, Ottawa, 1979. The list contains indexes for newspapers published in France, Great Britain, Greenland, Pakistan and the United States.