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NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 10 November 1988
6.00 for 6.30 p.m.
at CSIRO, 314 Albert St, East Melbourne
Committee Room, Third Floor

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Australian Society of Indexers Medal for 1988

The 1988 Australian Society of Indexers Medal has been awarded to Elmar Zalums for his index to the sixth volume of Manning Clark's *A history of Australia*, published by Melbourne University Press in 1987.

The medal was presented to Mr Zalums at the Society's dinner held at Graduate House, University of Melbourne, on 30 August 1988.

The judges' report delivered by the chairman of the judging panel, John Arnold, appears below.

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I think it was the late Stephen Murray-Smith who once wrote 'bibliographers are the unsung heroes of research'. It is a comment I readily support. But I think that indexers should be placed in the same category. As a writer, researcher, librarian and former book seller, I use books as my tools of trade probably as much, if not more, than anyone else here tonight. Often, I am just after a piece of information which I hope to find through an index. Although I am not always successful, to me a book without an index is like bread without butter or a good dinner without an accompanying bottle of wine. However, with both bottles of wine and indexes to books, there are good and bad examples of each. The manufacture of wine I will leave to the experts. It is a piece of advice that authors and publishers heed when considering an index to their books: leave well alone and give the job to the experts. For indexing is a skill which requires, amongst others, such attributes as patience, powers of concentration, intelligence and a meticulous mind.

These are things which hardly need to be stated to members of the Australian Society of Indexers. In delivering the judges' report for the Society's Medal for 1988 I would like to congratulate the Society for organising this award, aimed, as I see it, at promoting standards of excellence in indexing in Australia.

Seven books were short listed for consideration. They were, in random order: Robert Hughes' *The fatal impact*, Gavin Souter's *Acts of Parliament* (index compiled by Dorothy Prescott), Brian Plomley's *Weep in silence* (index compiled by Anne Batt), the sixth volume of Manning Clark's *A history of Australia* (index compiled by Elmar Zalums), John Adams' history of Bairnsdale entitled *Path among the years* (with the index by the author), *Australians: a historical dictionary* (for which Jean Hagger compiled the index) and John Goode and Carol Wilson's *Fruit and vegetables of the world*. The indexer is clearly acknowledged in three of these titles, namely the books by Souter, Clark and *Australians: a historical dictionary*. This is a practice that should be commended as it is a recognition of the professional nature and skills involved in the task.

The judges for this year's award were Dianne Reilly, the La Trobe Librarian; Cherryl Schauder, Lecturer in Information Services at RMIT; and myself, the La Trobe Research Librarian at the State Library of Victoria, as Chairman. Needless to say, we had a difficult job. The calibre of the entries was high, in some cases particularly so. In judging a competition such as this one tends to look for faults or flaws in the index rather than for its strengths or good points. The latter speak for themselves. Obviously the fewer the faults the better the index. In checking for blemishes one looks for omissions such as the lack of cross-references and differentiated entries rather than actual errors. Thus one concludes that such and such an index was a good one but could have been better if so and so had been done. This was the case with six of the books we judged. Our criticisms could often be described as pedantic but, like
the diamond with the minutest of scratches, they are still faults which make the item in question less than perfect.

As judges we could not find fault with the index to the final volume of Manning Clark's *History of Australia*, and it is to the compiler of this index, Elmar Zalums, that we chose to award the Australian Society of Indexers Medal for 1988. This is not to say that it is a perfect index. I doubt such a paragon is possible: as mere mortals we certainly do not claim the omnipotent powers necessary to judge such an index. However, we feel that Elmar Zalums' index is one that sets the standard of excellence that this award tries to promote. Its length and structure are appropriate to the book's text and audience, and the cross-referencing and directional references answered all the questions we tried to trap it with.

John Arnold

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Constructing an Index

Late in 1986 I was delighted to be asked by Melbourne University Press to index Professor Manning Clark's sixth volume of his *History of Australia*.

As a rule, I try to read through the page proofs before starting the index, in order to gauge at what level and depth to index and what sort of entries to make.

When MUP suggested sending Clark's proofs in two batches I gladly accepted it, as I was familiar with the themes of his *History of Australia* in the preceding volumes and had indexed volumes four and five.

The first section of *A history of Australia: volume 6: the old dead tree and the young tree fern: 1916-1935 with an epilogue* arrived on the Feast of the Annunciation 1987 and the last section a month later, just before Anzac Day. I returned the printout of the completed index on 18 May. The text covers 500 pages and the index 22.

The publisher/editor made no specific demands; there were no directives on index length.

On receipt of the sections of proofs I rapidly read the pages and at the end of each chapter mentally summarised its substance. By then I had a fair idea that a number of entries would require subdivision. I then read through each page and underlined possible index entries, and immediately commenced the breakdown into subdivisions for some persons (Bruce, Chifley, Curtin, Hughes, Lawson and Menzies and so on); organisations, subjects and newspapers (e.g. Labor Party, conscription, classes, World War I, *Sydney Morning Herald, Workers' Weekly*). For others, such as Louis Esson and the Palmers, the subdivision process started later.

The final index covers organisations, persons, places, titles and subjects. Each entry, where appropriate, is subdivided. There are cross references, see and see also references. *APAIS thesaurus* (3rd edn, 1986) and free selection of keywords were used for vocabulary control. I did not follow the rule that where subjects occur incidentally on successive pages, the pages should be listed separately.

'Incidental mentions of successive pages (19, 20, 21) are far too fussy and subjective for me: what seems incidental to the indexer or author may not seem so to the user and vice versa... Giving the covering pagination only, in either case, is not only more realistic but saves space'

Instead of writing information on cards and then having it typed later, I keyed it directly into a personal computer. I have an Apple Macintosh, equipped with 512K of memory, 20 MB of hard disk and a standard Apple dot matrix printer.

The software was developed by my son Robert, a computer professional specialising in software development for some twelve years.

The indexing software allows me to index up to four books at any one time. It also makes good use of the mouse providing a user friendly interface. These facilities mean a considerable reduction in overall costs with final typing and proof reading eliminated. Most importantly the quality of the index is enhanced and the whole process is speeded up - an important consideration, since publication is usually waiting on the indexer.

The indexing software allows me to enter headings and sub-headings representing subjects, concepts, corporate and personal names. These are automatically sorted in correct alphabetical order. Printouts can be obtained at any time. Indeed the information can be passed on to other software packages such as word processing for special editing or as input to type-setting programs. The former is important as the alphabetical sorting process does not cope with the alphabetical arrangement of Mc and Mac, which just goes to show that technology can't necessarily cope with everything.

E. Zalums

* * * * *** * * * * *

Course in Book Indexing

In early 1987 the University of NSW's School of Librarianship approached Alan Walker to run an evening class in book indexing in Sydney. Because he was too busy at the time Alan approached me to organise it, and agreed to do part of the teaching. I had attended the course run in Canberra by RMIT in 1986.

We began organising in August and approached UNSW with a draft timetable. We wrote to the Australian Society of Indexers, but were unable to give them enough information at the time for them to feel able to give us their official endorsement, though they were reasonably supportive.

We decided that the most appropriate format was six three-hour sessions over six weeks. This would allow students plenty of time for preparation and homework, which we viewed as essential if we were to make the best use of the time. The most convenient time of year was during university vacation, but not too close to Christmas. We chose to hold the course on Tuesday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. from 3 November to 8 December.

The audience we wanted to reach was a mix of people with experience in either library work or publishing, but little experience in book indexing. Accordingly, in September we published notices in the newsletters of the Library Association, the Society of Editors (NSW), the Galley Club of Sydney, and Thorpe's *Weekly Book Newsletter*. With the help of the University's Continuing Education Support Unit, we (the School, Alan, and I) put together a flyer for those responding to the notices, and also posted copies to publishers, libraries and indexers in Sydney.
At a rate of $135 for each attendee, we had budgeted for a minimum number of 21 participants and a maximum of 30. I was not convinced that we would get even 21 responses. But in the event we accepted 32 and had to turn others down. The participants' background was shared almost exactly evenly between librarianship and publishing. No one dropped out through lack of interest.

Rather than attempt to produce all the course materials ourselves, we used the workbook used by RMIT, who permitted us to do so for a modest fee.

We were amending and refining the timetable almost up to the time the course began. Partly because we are not familiar with all aspects of book indexing but chiefly to give the students some variety, we chose to use guest lecturers for some sessions. We also split each three-hour session into two distinct halves to prevent interest flagging. By opening night our timetable was:

Week 1:  
Introduction [What is an index; what is it for]  
Methods of indexing [How indexers work; tools; organisations, reference books]

Week 2:  
Selecting terms [Determining scope; types of entry; elements of an entry; first steps; selecting the index entries]  
Headings and sub-headings [Form of subject headings, and of name headings; sub-headings, cross-references; notes]

Week 3:  
Filing  
Style [Indented and run-on indexes; capitalisation; punctuation, typefaces]  
Concurrent sessions:  
Overview of publishing [The world of publishing; liaison with the publisher]  
Information storage and retrieval

Week 4:  
Editing the index  
Concurrent sessions:  
The publisher's requirements [House style; copy editing; proofreading; copyright]  
Subject access

Week 5:  
Types of material [New editions; periodicals; newspapers; cumulative parts; non-print material; computer databases]  
The business of indexing [Type of business organisation; budgeting; tax; quotes; payment; contracts]

Week 6:  
Microcomputer systems [Automatic indexing systems; standalone software; wordprocessing adjuncts; text retrieval software]  
Software demonstrations  
Review of the course

During the options in weeks 3 and 4 we split the class into those with experience in publishing and those with experience in the information industry, and had speakers from the School of Librarianship and from a large publishing house. The session on indexing as a business was given by a lecturer in commercial law. The rest of the sessions were divided between Alan and me. Most evenings we handed out homework exercises in what we had taught or would teach next week. Each week the class was split into discussion groups, to discuss how they had tackled their homework and compare their work with answer sheets.
Inevitably, we were unable to stick rigidly to the timetable. In order to expand on some subjects that attracted unexpected interest we had to curtail others.

In spite of last-minute glitches, we were both very pleased at how the course went, and at the students' level of interest. We did have a few problems with the workbook; there were passages we did not agree with, and we found the answers to exercises often diverged from our expectations.

Written comments by students at the end of the course were favourable on the whole. Since we have been asked to consider running the course again at a later date, the comments will be helpful. Many students found the course too rushed, and we will need either to extend it (making it more expensive) or to cut down on the number of topics covered. The handouts were considered very useful. Some students felt that homework should be assessed, or wanted sets of 'right' answers; an exercise on constructing a complete index was requested by several. Group discussions gained a mixed reception; it is clear that we need to rotate membership of the groups and control them more tightly. There was great interest in the use of microcomputers, and in running an indexing business.

As a final work, although the University pays the standard rate of lecturers, with all the organising and lesson planning, my hourly rate averaged $6. Clearly a lesson in time management.

1988 Course

We are planning to run the course again from 1 November to 6 December 1988 from 6.00 - 9.00 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please write to:

Continuing Education Support Unit
University of New South Wales
PO Box 1
Kensington NSW 2033

Michael Wyatt

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Indexers available

*Indexers available* is a directory providing a comprehensive listing of indexers who are members of the Australian Society of Indexers and are available to take commissions, together with their subject indexing specialties. The 1988 edition is available at $7.50 to members and $10.00 to non-members.

To order please send cheques/money order direct to:

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Australian Society of Indexers
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Melbourne Vic. 3001
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Sydney, NSW 2000

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Mentone, Vic. 3194

Mr I. Odgers,
10 Little Leveson Street,
North Melbourne, Vic. 3051

Mr J. Swinburne
26 Closeburn Avenue,
East Prahran, Vic. 3181

Recommended Rates for Indexing

The Australian Society of Indexers has recommended the following hourly rates for indexing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>$22.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$25.00 + CPI increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Several organisations, such as CSIRO, have accepted these rates for payment of freelance indexers.
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