AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

NEWSLETTER

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AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

NEWSLETTER

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS
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Ex Officio: Chairman, Panel of Assessors; Editor, *Newsletter*

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ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

George Levick, Chairman of the Panel of Assessors from 1980 to 1988, describes his procedure for evaluating indexes submitted for registration. The Society's checklist for assessors follows his article. Members interested in applying for registration should contact the Secretary, Australian Society of Indexers, GPO Box 1251L, Melbourne Vic. 3001.

While I believe that the 'Checklist for assessors', whose development was one of the first acts of the Panel, has served us well, I have found as the years go by that it gives a rather misleading impression of the way in which I, at least, approach the assessment of submitted indexes. In particular, the checklist implies a progression from particular factors to general qualities, whereas in what follows you will note that if anything the progression is in the reverse direction and is in any case, not nearly so distinct.

(Here I must also emphasise that the object of assessment is not to award prizes for excellence, but to establish a basis for a claim to competence under the common constraints of professional practice.)

I proceed in five major steps:

1. A complete sequential reading of the index itself.
2. A survey of the text, particularly the preliminary and introductory matter.
3. A detailed analysis of a significant sample of text to evaluate the application of headings to the topics covered.
4. A check of a significant sample of headings and references within the index to evaluate the accuracy of indictors to the text.
5. Comparison of comments and conclusions with any notes provided by the applicant as to the conditions under which the index was compiled.

1. **Reading the Index**

It may seem odd that this comes first; in some senses the index may be considered meaningless except as it pertains to the text. The reasons are two: one negative, one more positive.

The negative object is to ensure that the indexer's work is evaluted on its own terms. We all, I suppose, bring certain expectations and preferences regarding style, form and content when we consult an index. It is much easier to put these preconceptions aside and see the index as the indexer intended it, if it is read as a work in itself.

More positively, the first read-through makes the assessor familiar with what I may call the character of the index. Character is difficult to describe with any technical precision, but it ranges broadly from a stern, sharp-edged reference tool that expects your close attention and demands some technical competence, to a helpful, neighbourly and colloquial guide.

With experience, too, one can gain at least a preliminary impression from this reading of typographical correctness, consistency of layout and terminology, and adherence to any conventions claimed or implied.

At the end of this stage, I also check rule of thumb parameters such as the percentage of the publication allocated to the index, numbers of page-references in undifferentiated strings, and so on.

2. **Broad appreciation of the text**

This needs little discussion. The object, obviously, is for the assessor to gain familiarity with the scope, intentions, and character of the text so as to allow comparison with those of the index. In general what is needed is a fairly direct correspondence, that is, the index should reflect the tone and level of the author's treatment of the subject-matter. There are exceptions to this (for instance, an index to even a strongly anecdotal 'natural history' might well take a sterner view of biological nomenclature than does the text) but in my experience they are few and subtle.

3. **Sample of text**

This amounts to an indexing task in itself. I try to locate a unit (say, a chapter) that is typical in that it reflects the impressions gained at step 2; and then, paragraph by paragraph, check that the index accurately describes the subject-matter and its development. At this step, as in the next, I take particular care to follow up and check the adequacy of any cross-references that are (or seemingly should be) employed.

4. **Sample of the index**

This is the obverse of step 3, here taking the view of the user rather than of the indexer. It simply consists of looking up in the text the indicated passages from a reasonably large, random sample of headings. The object, more than anything, is just to see that the references to page numbers are accurate; though obviously in the course of doing so the impression of adequacy and appropriateness of the headings themselves gained at step 3 may be reinforced.

5. **Conclusion**

Where practicable, I leave any consideration of comments (usually in mitigation) supplied by the applicant to the end; I believe that it is best to maintain an outsider's view as long

as possible. On the other hand, if the applicant has been able to anticipate and explain any serious criticisms that may have arisen, that fact should carry its full appropriate weight - though to understand is not always completely to forgive.

George Levick

REGISTER OF INDEXERS

Checklist for Assessors

(To be read in association with: British Standard BS3700: 1988 - *Preparing indexes to books, periodicals and other documents*)

A THE INDEX ITSELF

1. Are there multiple indexes? If so, is this a justifiable response to an identifiable problem?
2. Are the layout and general presentation helpful to the user? Particularly, are headings, subheadings (and so on) readily distinguishable from each other, and one from the other?
3. Is there an introductory note? If so, does it accurately reflect - and explain - any unusual features of the index?
4. Are the following consistently adhered to?
   i. alphabetical order (whether word-by-word, or letter-by-letter),
   or
   ii. other order as specified
   iii. punctuation (particularly as related to (ii) above)
   iv. conventions of capitalisation
   v. correct and conventional spelling
5. Are synonyms, antonyms, and unusual conventions (e.g. obsolescent terms) used in the text adequately allowed for (e.g. by cross-references or multiple entries)?
6. Are page-references reasonably well distributed among headings of equal status so as to avoid strings of undifferentiated references without resort to artificial or arbitrary subdivision?
7. Does the choice of headings give evidence of an awareness on the part of the indexer of a specifiable readership?

B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDEX AND TEXT

1. Are page-references accurate (or is there evidence of inadequate checking of pagination)?
2. Are page-references complete (or are there significant passages of text left unindexed)?
3. Particularly, are such 'sub-texts' as forewords, footnotes, illustrations and appendices indexed? If so, are these references usefully differentiated from those referring to the main text?
4. Is the length of the index adequate to the length and density of the text? (As a general guide, assuming two columns of index per page, indexes to light works should have about three percent of the number of text pages; to general works about five percent; and to specialist works, 12-15 percent.)
5. Does the index - in relation to its length - adequately attempt to match the scope and detail of the text?

C. GENERAL

In respect of all circumstances known to you, does the index - in relation to the text - give you confidence that its creator can be recommended to potential clients by the Society?

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH MEETING 26 APRIL 1989

A meeting of New South Wales members of the Australian Society of Indexers was held at the State Library of NSW on the 26 April 1989. The aims of the meeting were to discuss whether there was a need for a NSW branch, to determine what form it and its activities should take (if any) and to elect officers if appropriate. The meeting also provided an opportunity for members to meet Ann Hall from the Society of Indexers, UK, to hear her speak on her experiences as an indexer, and to see a demonstration of the Macrex computer indexing system. About 50 people attended the meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Michael Wyatt and commenced with a talk by Ann Hall entitled: "How I make a good living out of indexing".

Ann said she chose to speak on her work as an indexer rather than a more academic subject such as 'The state of indexing in the UK' because that is what she knows about. She started indexing with file cards, but has used a computer (Atari) since 1981, starting with a simple program called Minion (written with her husband), and later moving on to Macrex. The computer has improved her productivity (and profit) enormously, and she now indexes six to seven books per month. She admits, however, that life is a lot easier if you live with a computer expert who can help at crucial moments. Ann made enough money from indexing to enable her to move to the country where her husband runs a bed-and-breakfast establishment while she indexes.

A show of hands of members of the audience indicated that about half used computers for indexing and that about 10 made a full-time living from indexing.

Ann also teaches indexing by correspondence through a set of lessons called 'Book Indexing Postal Tutorials'. The British Society of Indexers also teaches indexing. Students buy a manual and get tutorial help. They then index a book under the supervision of a professional indexer from the society (cost 30 pounds) and are then eligible to submit a book for registration.

Various topics were then discussed including the range of subjects which Ann will index (anything but science and technology), acknowledgement of the indexer (rare except for Blackwells which automatically acknowledges the indexer), checking of the index (Ann only has time to do spot checks, unless she has a feeling that something is wrong; Macrex will put entries in page order, which makes checking easier), finding work (Ann has sent a total of 250 letters to publishers), time spent in administrative-type work (Ann spends little, has a good accountant and uses the British postal service to send work to publishers; the audience seemed to favour using a courier service), how to deal with editorial problems such as misspelling of name (Ann puts notes to the editor, but does not spend time fixing or researching problems) and the format in which the index is given to the publisher (Ann doesn't supply the index on a floppy disc; members of the audience supplied floppy discs or camera-ready copy from a good printer or a typewriter).

Qualities which are characteristic of indexers suggested by Ann and various members include; being inverterate listmakers, being orderly and logical, with a tendency to categorise things, and having a good memory and a good general education (not necessarily formal).

Ann's indexing technique is to go very quickly through the manuscript highlighting certain types of words, e.g. place names, then people, then subjects, etc. This gives her an overall feel for the whole work, and she can then make the index, and add in the general concepts as well.

Formal Session:

After Ann's talk the meeting discussed the appropriate structure, direction and activities for the NSW branch.

The last time NSW members of the Society of Indexers met only two meetings were held before the branch petered out: this was thought to be partly because no formal structure had been established. It was suggested that this time a more formal structure might make a more lasting branch. A show of hands (actually vague affirmative murmurs) showed the majority of members to be in favour of some sort of formal structure. Committee members were then nominated or volunteered. They are Michael Wyatt, Gary Cousins, Carolyn Kearney, Alan Walker and Glenda Browne. This committee will function until general elections are held.

It was decided that the branch would have about three meetings per year and that these would include speakers, workshops, panel discussions (including problem-solving sessions) and group discussions (including issues which we wish to refer to the Society, or which they have referred to us) with short formal sessions included where necessary. There is nothing in the constitution about branches. It was suggested that the branch should arrange meetings etc, but would depend on Melbourne for the collection of fees and other secretarial duties.

It would be decided that meetings would be held near the city and near public transport, and that they would run from about 6.15 to 8.00 pm. The room at the State Library (Seminar room 2), notices etc. cost $100 this time. This means that if 25 people turned up to a meeting they would have to pay $5 for the room and refreshments. People at the meeting indicated that they would be happy to pay this much. The committee will also look at alternative meeting places. (The Society paid the costs for the first meeting).

It was suggested that the branch should keep the Society's aims in mind, eg. it might work with publishers to improve the indexers' lot. The branch would advertise and report meetings in the *Newsletter*.

It was suggested that a circular could be sent to members to find out what their interests are (for meetings etc.). This could be included as a page of the *Newsletter* and could be sent back to head office (they may be interested in the comments too) or to the committee. All future notices will be part of the newsletter. [A copy of the questionnaire is included in the mailing for NSW members]

Next Meeting: Book Indexing with Computers

The next meeting of the New South Wales members will be held at the State Library of NSW in Macquarie Street, Sydney, on Wednesday 22 November at 6.00 for 6.30 pm. The topic will be 'Book indexing with computers: a panel discussion'.

RSVP by telephoning Michael Wyatt on (02) 699 9491 or (02) 332 1414 by 17 November. A small donation will be requested to cover costs.

SOCIETY OF INDEXERS
CONFERENCE 1990
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
Friday 6 April to Sunday 8 April

The residential conference will be held at the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls: cost £80 sterling approx.

The conference will open with a drinks reception followed by a traditional Scottish dinner. (Formal dress not required - this is a friendly conference!)

The programme is planned to include sessions on:

- The business side of indexing and the contract proposed by the Society.
- Publisher sessions.
- Indexer from Bartholmew's, the map and atlas publisher.
- Legal indexing.
- Training - the Society's new course. Other training opportunities.
- Computers: question and answer session.

One extended session will be a multi-input from interested parties and bodies. This is planned on a 'stalls' basis, so that a more personal contact can be made. The new Society of Copy-Editors and Proof-Readers will be able to take part here.

The final session is traditionally devoted to 'Society Matters'.

And much, much more!

Contact for the conference:

Kate Chapman
Moghbrae
St Ronan's Terrace
Innerleithen
EH44 6RB
Scotlanc

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS - MEDAL DINNER

The Australian Society of Indexers Medal for 1989 will be awarded at a dinner to be held on Tuesday 24 October 1989:

VENUE:	Graduate House University of Melbourne 224 Leicester Street Carlton Vic.
TIME:	6.30 for 7.00 p.m.
COST:	$27.00 per head, all inclusive

RSVP Max McMaster (03) 418 7335 (B) or (03) 571 6341 (H) by Thursday, 19 October 1989

The Medal winner will be announced, together with details of runners-up. A certificate will also be presented to the successful publishing house.

This year we are keeping the name of the winner a surprise, so come along for what will be an enjoyable evening. The winning entry together with the runners-up will be on display.

INDEXERS AVAILABLE 1989/90

A questionnaire has been included with this issue of the *Newsletter* to form the basis of the 1989/90 issue of *Indexers available.*

This year members are being asked questions on topics in addition to conventional back-of-book indexing, as a means of promoting their expertise, but also to reflect the changing nature of indexers and indexing in Australia.

Could all members who are interested in accepting commissions for indexing work please complete the questionnaire and return it to the Honorary Secretary NO LATER than FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER 1989

Max McMaster

NEW MEMBERS

Ms K. Allchin	PO Box 501 Camberwell Vic. 3124
Mrs M. Armstrong	125 Windsor Street Paddington NSW 2021
Mrs B. Baird	87 Eton Road Lindfield NSW 2070
Mrs J. Bolitho	2 Kardella Lane Mt Eliza Vic. 3930
Mrs E. Brown	PO Box 289 Mt Waverley Vic. 3149
Ms M. Burton	77 Sunnyside Crescent Castlecraig NSW 2068
Mrs J. Carter	25 Calga Street Roseville NSW 2069
Ms C. Casey	12 Conrad Street North Ryde NSW 2113
Mrs L. Clark	41 Albert Street East Malvern Vic. 3145
Mrs B. Cooper	134 Windsor Crescent Surrey Hills Vic. 3127
Mrs C. Crighton	29 Turner Avenue Baulkham Hills NSW 2153
Mrs D. Davis	3/54 Blackburn Road Doncaster East Vic. 3109
Ms S. Dewar	1/712 Riversdale Road Camberwell Vic. 3124
Ms L. Doyle	16 Fisher Avenue Pennant Hills NSW 2120
Mr G. Eddy	24 Normanby Terrace Mt Martha Vic. 3934
Mrs P. Farrell	13 Garland Road Dalkeith WA 6009
Ms E. Fisch	152 Gold Street Clifton Hill Vic. 3068
Ms S. Gatt	37 Disraeli Grove Pascoe Vale Sth Vic 3044

Miss G. Gillespie	67 Barton Street Surrey Hills Vic. 3121
Mrs S. Grandfield	7/292 The Avenue Parkville Vic. 3052
Ms P. Holt	PO Box 127 Kingston ACT 2604
Mrs D. Jennings	74 Banool Road Balywn Vic. 3103
Ms M. Keily	5 Central Avenue Tyabb Vic. 3913
Mrs D. Lowther	PO Box 2915 Wellington New Zealand
Mrs M. McCabe	27 Northmead Avenue Northmead NSW 2152
Mr R. McLean	135 Rae Street North Fitzroy Vic. 3068
Mrs J. McMaster	4 Forster Avenue East Malvern Vic. 3150
Ms G. Marshall	74 Pannam Drive Hoppers Crossing Vic. 3030
Ms L. Mathias	16 Anthony Street Ormond Vic. 3204
Mrs D. Prescott	44 Lucas Street East Brighton Vic. 3187
Mr R. Price	2 Plume Court Glen Waverley Vic. 3150
Mr G. Ralph	15 Brian Street Lockleys SA 5032
Mrs C. Schauder	1 Geel Street Bentleigh Vic. 3204
Mrs M. Secker	PO Box 130 Franklin Tas. 7113
Mrs N. Sibtain	37 Yarrabung Road St Ives NSW 2075
Mrs B. Stonehouse	49 O'Grady Street Albert Park Vic. 3206
Mrs J. Sutton	133 Napolean Street Eltham Vic. 3095
Mrs M. Varghese	34 Folingsby Street Weston ACT 2611
Mrs E.D. Vitek	3 Newton Street Guildford NSW 2161
Mr B. Webster	17 Waterloo Road Northcote Vic 3070
Ms M. Wond	7 Kanandah Road Engadine NSW 2233

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER ISSUE

We welcome contributions to the *Newsletter*. If you have any material you feel would be suitable for inclusion, please send it to the Editor, Australian Society of Indexers, GPO Box 1251L, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, by Monday 27 November 1989.

Advertisements for publication in the *Newsletter* are now being accepted at the following rates:

1/2 inch block	$5
1 inch block	$10

To place an advertisement please forward text and appropriate cheque to:

The Editor
Australian Society of Indexers
GPO Box 1251L
Melbourne Vic 3001

Closing date for next issue 27 November 1989