



Australian Society of Indexers NEWSLETTER

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Australian Society of Indexers
NEWSLETTER

INDEXERS MEDAL

The Australian Society of Indexers Medal is again being offered for an "outstanding" index to a book or periodical compiled and first published in Australia or New Zealand.

To be eligible for the award, the index must be in print and must have been first published from 1990 onwards. It must have been compiled in Australia or New Zealand although the text to which it refers may have originated elsewhere.

For the award, indexes are judged at the level of outstanding professional achievement, thus sufficient material is required, both in quality and quantity, for appraisal. The index should be substantial in size - as a guide, comprising a minimum of four pages, double columned. The subject matter should be complex, requiring generally more than one category of words/phrases as index entries.

All interested persons are invited to nominate up to three indexes which meet the above criteria, and which they regard as worthy of consideration. Don't be bashful, you can nominate your own index!

Please submit nominations (including bibliographic details) as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, 28 August, 1992. Send to:

The Secretary,
Australian Society of Indexers,
GPO Box 1251L,
Melbourne, Victoria 3001



EDITORIAL

How many ways can you misspell a word? How many ways can you misspell 100,000 index terms? These are the kinds of problems I recently confronted as editor of the CSIRO Index database.

Some cities hold annual clean-ups to get rid of unwanted rubbish. At CSIRO Index, we have annual clean-ups to get rid of messy data. We have just completed a quality control check of all subject index terms in the CSIRO Index database (CSIX).

Many of the entries in the database were punched in before the days of sophisticated computer validation procedures. In those days, it was simply not possible to sort out the *wheat* from the *wheet**.

The first thing I noticed was that people have a lot of trouble with double letters, e.g. *abbatoirs** and *abbattoirs** rather than *abattoirs*. There was also much confusion about *sulfates*, *sulphates**, *sulfites* and *sulphites**.

Some mistakes were blatant typos, e.g. *pig hnadling**. Others were much more subtle, e.g. *magnetic anisotrophy** rather than *magnetic anisotropy*; *magnesia** rather than *magnesium oxides*. Some inconsistencies were due to stylistic preferences, e.g. *mangos** was changed to *mangoes* even though most dictionaries concede that both plural forms are acceptable.

Even geographic names can be ambiguous, e.g. *Murray-Darling Basin* had several variations such as *Murray Darling river basin**; *North West Shelf* also appeared in guises such as *northwest shelf*, *WA**.

The trickiest scientific names to spell were: *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* (a fungus which attacks pasture grasses - and careless editors); *Musca*

* Terms not in CSIRO Index Thesaurus.

vetustissima (bushfly - with its S's in all the wrong places) and *Panulirus cygnus* (rock lobster - confusing because it has *palinurid* larvae).

I am still trying to work out how one strange term stayed in the database unaltered for ten years, i.e. *parasigastrointestinal, pathogenesis, sheep**. Perhaps because it looks so ridiculous, everyone assumed it must be correct!

Nowadays, if we try to enter a term like *Asutralian Scoiety fo Idnexers** the system warns us we have invented a NEW DESCRIPTOR. Of course, we can always ignore the warning!

Steve Sunter

NEXT MEETING: Vic Branch

Topic: "Indexing the Argus"

Geraldine Suter, 1991 AusSI medallist has been invited to speak about her award-winning index. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 22 at 5.30 for 6pm. Venue is CPA House, 170 Queen St, Melbourne.

RSVP: Please book with Joyce Korn (606 9610) by Mon, July 20. Light refreshments supplied; no charge.

QUEENSLAND NEWS

Two former Brisbane indexers have been on the move. Jean Dartnell is heading back to Townsville to take up a position as Online & Reference Co-ordinator at James Cook University. She was formerly Librarian at Holy Spirit Hospital, Brisbane but worked at GBRMPA, Townsville, a few years ago.

Mary-Anne Secker has moved from the Hearing Book Library (now closed) to the Public Library at Biloela.

Any budding Brisbane correspondents out there?

TRAINING & COURSES

1. The AusSI (Vic) introductory book indexing course will be held in Melbourne in the spring-time. It will start on August 17 and end on Sept. 28. Sessions will be held on Monday evenings from 6pm to 8.30pm (no session Sept 14). The venue will be: Australian Society of Accountants, 170 Queen St. Cost is \$250 for the six sessions (\$225 for AusSI members). **Contact:** Max McMaster (03)418 7269

2. The Society of Editors (Vic) is holding a one-day workshop on **Editing, Fiction and Poetry**. Speakers include: Alex Miller (Author); Judith Rodriguez (Poet & University Lecturer) and Bryony Cosgrove (Fiction Editor). Workshop will be held on Saturday, June 27, 10.30am to 4.30pm at St Hilda's College, College Crescent, Parkville. Cost is \$80 including a light lunch (\$50 for members of Society of Editors).

Contact: Beryl Hill 871 2458 (BH); 885 2824 (AH). Bookings close on June 19.

International Conference

The Australian Society of Indexers is organising the inaugural International Indexing Conference to be held in Melbourne in April, 1995.



Apart from a large contingent of Australian delegates who *will* attend, we anticipate delegates coming from UK, USA, Canada, Japan, Europe, Africa and NZ.

At this early stage we expect 200-250 people to attend.

A Conference Sub-Committee is being established to organise the multitude of activities required. As the conference draws nearer some volunteers will certainly be called upon to provide assistance.

Any suggestions for a conference theme or conference topics will be gratefully received.

Further details will appear in our *Newsletter* as they become available.

Max McMaster

Indexing Photographs; Systematically

This following article is based on a talk Caroline Colton gave to the Australian Society of Indexers (NSW) at Sydney, April 9, 1992.

Last year I was contracted to design a database system for the purpose of recording data about photographic images. The brief also included the design of a lending system and the indexing of 6,500 transparencies.

The Client

The client was Worksafe Australia (National Occupational Health and Safety Commission). It is a Federal government body responsible for setting national standards, undertaking research, professional education and promotion of workplace health and safety.

The Collection

Worksafe Australia has a photographic collection of more than 15,000 slides and transparencies. The collection is used to service the needs of

organisations such as trade unions, educational bodies and publishers.

Originally, access to the collection was extremely dependent on the photographer. She had the onerous task of searching storage cabinets with only her memory as a guide. During her absence the utility of the collection was greatly reduced.

Objectives

The main objectives of the project were:

(i) To minimise the time required to service requests for photographic materials. (ii) To eliminate the organisation's over-dependency on the photographer.

Worksafe Australia already had two crucial resources available to improve access to the collection, i.e. a developing local area network (LAN) and dBase IV software.

Preliminary research

The first stage of the project was concerned with finding out the type of vocabulary which staff use when requesting images. Specific needs within the organisation were also documented. A data worksheet was developed and circulated to key staff for comment.

Setting up a system

Armed with the feedback from staff, I developed an input system in consultation with programmers. It comprised the main *Audio-Visual Collection File* plus a *Borrowers File* and *Lending File*. The structure of the main file included 27 fields, with 14 of these fields catering for subject terms. Other fields were set up to take care of details such as "item no." and "copyright status".

Visual identification

The photographer had the monumental task of identifying each photographic item and recording the key information required for the data worksheet.

The photographer's knowledge formed the cornerstone of the index.

Indexing standardisation

The indexer's job was to re-work the language used by the photographer. The main tool used for vocabulary control was the *CIS Thesaurus*, which is published by the ILO International Occupational Safety and Health Centre. In order to overcome the US orientation of that thesaurus, the indexer devised a supplementary list of subject headings (including those already devised by the Database Unit of Worksafe Australia).

Two reference works published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics were used in classification of other fields, i.e. *Australian Standard Industry Classification* (ASIC) was used for the "Industry" field and *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (ASCO) was used for the "Occupation" field.

An important feature of the index was the framing of a contextual guide for four subject fields:

1. Process
2. Equipment/Machinery
3. Hazard
4. Outcome

Each context was only listed on the indexer's maintenance file (to provide guidance for the indexer).

After indexing was completed, the data was input and edited.

Implementation and training

The final stage of the project was to train staff to be responsible for maintaining and developing the system. Training of staff to operate the system will start when the LAN system is online.

A manual was compiled which detailed every aspect of the database and system procedures. It was written with several discrete sections so that it can be easily updated when necessary. The manual is a very important training and reference tool.

Conclusion

The project was challenging because it required the development of a whole new system: from identifying user

needs to implementing a new product. Good communication was vital to the success of the project; the input of specialist skills from photographers and programmers were critical.

The indexer can't go solo when indexing photographs. Without the personal knowledge of people who can identify the context of the photograph, the photograph itself would be rendered meaningless.

Caroline Colton

REPORT ON MAY MEETING OF THE VIC BRANCH (Stir an Indexer)

"It doesn't matter how you choose your terms, as long as people know where to look." George Levick quoted the late Coryl Muntz on the choice of terms because the choosing was of particular concern to three of the indexers present at our discussion. While some creative answers were offered to questions raised on the night, inevitably those answers themselves prompted further questions.



Working with consultants

How best to use the advice of consultants was considered first, they have been asked to advise on the special terms which will be needed in an index

being compiled for non-specialist users. They could be called in at the editing stage, after the indexer has assigned terms from his own knowledge of what is likely to be sought (with dictionaries and thesauri to help when necessary). A problem could arise if the consultants suggested changes which would require radical alteration to the reference structure based on the indexer's earlier decisions, as alterations can be dangerous at the editing stage.

Cross-references

The richness of language can be a problem when a variety of terms is likely to be sought by a very wide public: the language of the work indexed must be used. Making references from every term likely to be looked for can stretch the index to an unmanageable length. The Victorian Statutes offer multiple possibilities for even such mundane affairs as waste (*rubbish, refuse, garbage ...*) and sanitary conveniences (*lavatories, water closets, w.c.'s* - if no water is involved, perhaps *dunnies?*) Topics covered in different contexts in different statutes will lengthen the list of *See also* as well as of *See* references.

Biographical confusions

For the indexer of a long run of a school magazine, making cross-references may be complicated by other uncertainties. Contemporary brothers with the same first names, and surnames that always attract the same nickname are cause for indecision. An indexer may choose to make a *See* reference such as: Jones, "Spud" *See* Jones, William, ("Spud") 1942-1947". But then a different William "Spud" Jones may later be found in the Under-16's football photograph in June 1947, inconsistent with the age suggested by the initial entry. Does this Spud belong to the same heading? Or is he his younger brother - or a member of another family? More research is needed. In the interest of keeping things simple, it was suggested that names be entered as they occur and references be made only when the indexer is on certain ground.

Directory-style indexes

How do you group entries in an index for a book about Australia's National Parks intended for tourists. Grouping references under the state where a park is located would be useful for someone wishing to visit all the parks in a particular state. Index users would expect to have direct access to the name of any specific park they were interested in; co-location by state as well would overload the index. It was suggested a separate listing by state could be constructed, in addition to the index, of parks by name. Another suggestion was to make a blanket reference in the index under each state, e.g. "See also the names of parks in (state)". Listing of the parks by name under such a reference was seen by some as spoon-feeding. It was agreed that grouping by state would provide the overview of the subject of the book which an index ought to give.

How many postings?

Too many undifferentiated page strings are frowned on in an index, but artificial subdivision to keep the numbers down can be foolish, as Hazel Bell¹ has pointed out. To some extent the number may be reduced by not indexing "mentions" but it was conceded that in an index to a book one might stray over the recommended number (six in BS3700:1988).

Updating an index

Consolidation of indexes made by others has been found frustrating and time-consuming by many indexers: we agreed that it is wiser at times to re-index, rather than to spend time incorporating an index found to be inadequate.

Vocabulary control

Research over many years has found it difficult to establish that "control" by, e.g., a thesaurus reduces the variability of applied indexing terms. It may be that indexers can be as individual in their selection of terms from a given list as they are in developing their own vocabularies.

Getting "Ministerial Orders"

Before we finished the meeting and set out for dinner, someone opened a nice fresh can of worms for us: "Ministerial Orders" and where does one find them? *Ministerial Document Service*², the successor to the *Commonwealth Record*, reproduces only media releases, by Ministers and Opposition Leaders. "Ministerial Orders" are listed by this name in Volume 3 of the Australian Security Commission's *ASC Digest*,³ however, only Orders made under certain sections of the Corporation Law are listed. *Guide to Government Publications in Australia*⁴ by Michael Harrington mentions Orders as a subordinate form of legislation (p. 59). These are Orders made under certain Acts: notices in the *Gazette* give their source of availability. They have such titles as "Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Orders", "Civil Aviation

Orders". Librarians at the meeting became very interested in this topic. More information may be provided in a future *Newsletter*.

Jennifer Pritchard

Footnotes

1. Bell, Hazel. Indexing biographies: lives do bring their problems. *The Indexer* 16 (3) April 1989, 168-72.
2. *Ministerial document service : daily collation of Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' statements*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Govt. Pub. Service (1988-)
3. *ASC Digest*. South Melbourne: Centre for Professional Development for the Australian Securities Commission. (1991-)
4. Harrington, Michael. *Guide to Government publications in Australia*. Canberra, ACT : Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1990



BOOK REVIEWS



Indexing from A to Z.

Hans H. Wellisch.
Published by H.W. Wilson Co., NY,
1991. xxvi, 461pp. 24 cm. Bibliog.,
index (39p.). ISBN 0-8242-0807-2:
(cased): US\$40.

Reviewed by George Levick

I suppose it is because there are only so many things that simply have to be said in books (and other materials) to do with indexing, that the good ones are immediately familiar, however new, and the bad ones are, well, otherwise. Whatever else I may have to say in this review, let me make it clear from the outset that this, beyond any doubt, is a good book about indexing. The obvious, and deserved, comparison is with Knight's much-respected *Indexing, The Art of*.

However, the differences are also clear, and I should discuss each of them: Wellisch's book is a dozen years younger, American rather than English, and something of the order of twice the size of Knight's.

The first of these differences is clearly an advantage to the Wellisch book. It is not meant to be read from start to finish in order, but when it is, a number of sub-themes emerge, one of which presents "about 1980" as a watershed. (The posthumous Preface to the Third Edition of Knight's book implicitly concurs.) That time is the divide between "BC (Before Computers)" and the present; it saw the emergence of a number of new or revised filing codes; and it was the time of the "Big Mac Battle" (firmly won, in Wellisch's view, by the computer-aided file-as-written side). A decade or so into a post-revolutionary era instinctively

appeals as a time for review and consolidation.

The second difference is hardly worth considering. This is a scholarly as well as a practical book, and as such it is firmly within the scholarly tradition that is cosmopolitan in outlook and in tone. For those with specific apprehensions about peoples divided by a common tongue, be assured that British Standards, codes and texts get at least equal time with ANSI, the Library of Congress, and the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

As to the third of my differences, the size of the book, I have a number of reservations. The greater length has to do with, first, a greater technical depth in certain practical matters; secondly, a willingness to digress into academic matters bearing more or less closely on the topic at hand; and thirdly, inevitable redundancies associated with the topic-by-topic approach, possibly aggravated by the A-to-Z arrangement. As Wellisch himself says:

I must ask my readers to bear with some redundancy in the treatment of certain issues, which is virtually unavoidable in a book organized alphabetically by topics ... [p. xx]

Just so. There are other (and some at first blush more rational) ways to organise a book, even if one concedes the virtue of writing it so as to consist of substantially self-contained essays. (Simply by way of example, some order of difficulty, from "hints on how to start" to "particular technical problems" would be almost conventional by comparison.) I'm afraid I can't help but suspect a bit of preciousness about the A-to-Z. "Oh well", I can hear someone say, "Knight got in first with inversion as an indexer's fancy, so all that is left is to have a bit of a dig at alphabetical order ..." That suspicion is strengthened if not confirmed by the last page of the main text:

[Under the heading "Zen and the Art of Indexing"] But for this book a topic beginning with the letter Z had to be found, and in the absence of one pertaining to indexing ... [this] seemed to serve as well as any other ... Now that I have your attention, this may also be an opportunity to tell you the story of the letter Z ... [p. 408]

I don't want to seem humourless, but let us remember that Knight's little joke took up only the space of the title, while Wellisch's, if that is what it is, affects the entire layout - and bulk - of his book.

The last few words of that extract illustrate another characteristic of the book, and one that certainly contrasts with Knight, who says of his that "It may be objected that [it] is on the whole rather elementary ..." No-one would make such an objection to Wellisch, who is everywhere trying put indexing practices, problems and solutions into an academic context, often of comparative or historical linguistics. Even on short acquaintance with the book, it is no surprise to find the article on "Greek Script" opening with:

The Greeks learned to write from the Phoenicians, whose consonantal alphabet - the first in the history of writing - they adopted ... [p.146]

This tendency reaches its flowering in a longish and mostly very interesting article devoted to "Index: The Word, its History and Meanings". The book would certainly be the poorer without it; I occasionally wondered, however, whether readers who were looking for basic direction on, say, the filing of Greek characters would always be patient with little homilies on the origins of writing.

Not that their patience would go unrewarded. Wellisch's approach to practical matters is generally to survey the field of Standards and codes

(relevant ones are duly listed at the end of each article). This is emphatically not to say that the approach is typically to provide a mere compilation of others' directives - far from it. Wellisch is willing to present standard views, but does not hesitate to discuss, evaluate, and occasionally (with reasons) reject them. Nor is he afraid, when the spirit moves him, to be dogmatic on his own account. Potential buyers who happen to be female should be warned of one passage in particular:

... they [the authors] were badly served by their indexer, who as indicated in the acknowledgments, was - a woman! [p.37-38]

There is nothing in the context to indicate whether the gender of the perpetrator so aggravates or mitigates the sin in Wellisch's eyes - his own is as great in either case.

Another example, not quite so extreme, can be found under the 'Greek Script' heading referred to above:

Under no circumstances should headings written in Greek be interfiled with Roman-alphabet headings as if they had been Romanised. Nothing is being gained in terms of space by this farrago ... [p. 147-148]

No circumstances? Farrago? - words perhaps a bit strong for those of us who have little training in the traditional Classics, though maybe we deserve them. We might feel less slighted had the article included an ordered list of the Greek alphabet; surely among the broad range of readers claimed by Wellisch there could be a strong contingent who would look to him to provide just that.

In most cases, to be fair, this kind of material is indeed supplied: for instance, under the heading "Ampersand" we find an expanded spelling for the symbol in each of 22 languages; under "Initial Articles", a similarly extensive survey of the form

and filing of articles from different languages in various types of index; a comprehensive set of marks under "Proofreading"; all the facts and figures you need to calculate the probable "Length of an Index"; and so on.

There is thorough advice, and generous helpings of pertinent examples, under such "practical" headings as Abbreviations, Cross-references, Display of Subheadings, Numerals, Personal Names, Singular or Plural, Symbols, and more. On general topics of professional interest, Wellisch is good on a number of forms of other-than-back-of-book indexes (I enjoyed the paragraph heading "The Three Stooges: KWIC, KWAC and KWOC"); he offers sound advice on relationships with publisher and author, contracts, costing, professionalism-in-indexing and other like issues; and, as already noted, the book displays a keen interest in the more academic and scholarly underpinnings of the practice and profession.

I must, I suppose, comment on its own index. Wellisch remarks that it "almost certainly suffers from the fault of over-indexing" and I cannot disagree.

Having occasion to seek advice on indexing of items in which people are freely referred to by nicknames, I was directed by this index to five locations, at only one of which was anything substantial said - that nicknames should be enclosed in "quotation marks" - a meagre harvest for my effort.

Moreover, I am far from convinced that the names of those who are referred to only as authors of items in a bibliography should appear in the index of a book such as this: still, Wellisch's text (p.25) vigorously defends this practice, so his index can hardly be blamed for it. And let us reflect that for once the index was, no doubt, treated indulgently for space by both author and publisher. In all other respects, it is (properly) exemplary.

So the book is good value, in a simple uncomparative sense; and if I have an unrepentant preference for the dryer,

sparer style of the Knight book, I suppose that says more about me than about either of them. It seems that Knight is now not available, and perhaps it is a bit dated in any case; and from what I can gather this book will cost about the same when it is available in this country as we were paying for Knight when last we could get it. So Wellisch, I think, is setting what amounts to a new standard in texts on indexing. Beginner or professional, if you need (as most of us do at least some of the time) a guide, friend and especially philosopher on your desk, this is one of those few books you simply must not fail to consider.

Notes:

1. This book was also reviewed by Mary Piggot (UK) in *The Indexer* Vol. 18(1), April 1992, p.59.
2. *Indexing, The Art of* by G.Norman Knight is out-of-print and no longer available in Australia.
3. A limited number of copies of *Indexing from A to Z* are available in Australia from AusSI member Kerry Herbstreit. Cost is \$63.50; Send written order & cheque to: Herbstreit & Associates Pty Ltd, PO Box 181, Mt Evelyn, Vic, 3796. Ph: (03) 736 3424.

Indexing and abstracting in theory and practice.

F. W. Lancaster
Published by University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and
Information Science, Ill., USA, 1991.
xiv, 328pp. 24cm. Illus., index.
ISBN 0-87845-083-1: (cased): US \$39

Reviewed by John Simkin

Ideally a good textbook should do two things. Firstly, it should present the theory of the subject in such a way that it enables the student to grasp the concepts of the discipline - to "think" with them and soon, to reach the stage where the student can create new applications of the principles or, if necessary, recreate the whole practice of the discipline.

Secondly, it should give sufficient explicit instructions for the student to perform practical tasks within the already accepted applications. As the title indicates, Lancaster is attempting these two things. He succeeds on both counts.

Up until now we have tended to develop a profession of indexing whose practitioners can do a good, workmanlike job but who leave the consideration of the principles of the organisation of knowledge to a few academics whose work is sometimes undermined by "information specialists" - those who think that knowledge consists of a large collection of scraps of information which need only the right mechanical manipulation to be "indexed".

Lancaster puts theory and practice back into alignment. As he proceeds to the practical chapters on methods of indexing and abstracting he makes us aware of how effectively particular practices fulfil the principles. He implicitly invites the reader to evaluate and includes several sections on methods of evaluation - the coverage of a database, retrievability, predictability, timeliness - and some brief reference to studies of user method and perception. There are points where Lancaster uses what he describes as a "very pragmatic" view of "good" indexing defining it as that which "allows items to be retrieved from a database... and prevents them from being retrieved when they are not [useful]". As the concepts being sought become more complex so the ability of the searcher to define terms and conceptualise their interrelations must be enhanced. The usual level of ability assumed even in tertiary courses for librarians is not enough. On the development of this ability depends the growth of the skills associated with reference librarians and other information officers. However their development of such skills will count for nothing if the indexer has not been there first using as great or greater skills.

This book must be used creatively. It is not a do-it-yourself book to be applied step-by-step as if from a recipe. However the author does include two chapters of practical exercises to which he supplies suggested solutions and other notes.

The chapter on the future of indexing and abstracting services gives a brief sketch, somewhat oversimplified, of the future. However it is worthy of study in that it predicts new (and probably better) applications of existing principles. Only those who have a strong grasp of the principles will be able to make much of the future applications when they overtake us. In the meantime we need to increase the number of those who understand the principles who can help to guide the new developments and help to prevent them being subverted.

I found this book difficult to review. It started me on chains of ideas which distracted me from the job in hand. However a book cannot be "too" stimulating. I recommend this one in the hope that it may have a similar effect on others.

Notes:

1. This book was also reviewed by Ken Bakewell (UK) in *The Indexer* Vol. 18(1), April 1992, pp.59-60.

An 'apostrophe'

Chambers 20th Century Dictionary defines an *apostrophe* as "a sudden turning away from the ordinary course of a speech to address some person or object present or absent, explained by Quintilian as addressed to a person present..."

Did you know that an *apostrophe* is also a botanical term defined as "the ranging of chloroplasts along the side walls of a cell in intense light".

Of course, it's also "a mark showing the omission of a letter or letters in a

word...". So what do you call a mark showing the omission of an apostrophe? One astute reader pointed out that the last issue of the *Newsletter* omitted no fewer than three apostrophes in error, two of which were missing from the article about Muphry's Law. But Muphry claimed yet another victim. In the note of explanation the reader had accidentally written *Muphrey's Law*.

- Ed.

LETTERS

Electronic Back-of-Book ?

It was most gratifying for an earth scientist to see the well deserved "highly commended" award to Dorothy Prescott for her index of the magnificent two volume set *Geology of the mineral deposits of Australia and Papua New Guinea* [F.E. Hughes (Ed.), Parkville: Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1990], bestowed by the Australian Society of Indexers (see *Newsletter* 16(3): p.2).

This invaluable reference source of 1828 pages of text and figures has Author and Subject indexes, with the latter occupying 41 additional pages, which include all *named* mineral deposits; related *named* stratigraphic, tectonic and structural entities; and with the *named* deposits also entered under the name(s) of the contained metal(s) or mineral(s). The latter aspect of the Subject Index is so thorough that the user can readily find all deposits containing a particular commodity of interest, even if it is only a minor product of a particular deposit.

Yet, the wealth of other factual information on the geology of the deposits in these two volumes is so great, it would seem that only an electronic version could provide the data retrieval capability to satisfy the keen (re)searcher. The greatly added value of the search ability of an electronic database format, even with unsophisticated automatic indexing, allowing essentially unlimited cross

referencing, could be facilitated by provision of an electronic version at minimal additional cost to the publisher.

With most published reference works, and many other book types, going through a word processor stage today before being printed, most of the time consuming (high cost) work of authorship, editorship, and word processing, has been done. Only the Back-of-Book index, the most important part of the printed reference work, may not be needed in the electronic version, that could be supplied on diskette in a pocket in the back of the book. Readers with access to PC's could then use their own favourite text retrieval software to search the text.

Chris Laughton

Scrambling our words

It disturbed me to see the attention given to anagrams, Scrabble and crossword puzzles, by people purporting to be indexers, in the May issue of the *Newsletter*.

After all words are our stock in trade and we shouldn't be seen to do anything to bring them into contempt. Anagrams (scrambling) and Scrabble strip words of their meaning - and what is a word without its meaning? (Some indexers evidently bring *Muphry's Law* upon themselves).

Crossword puzzles keep the meanings but mock them. However, their worst fault is that they're hopelessly stultifying. It's such a waste of time trying to find solutions to factitious problems that have already been solved. Once some sort of educational value was claimed for them but I'd say it would be far better to read a dictionary than abandon oneself to the partial definitions the devisers of crossword puzzles deal in.

The world is full of genuine unsolved problems, from the awful and huge,

like the state of the world, down to the small but still real ones that indexers must solve. If we need to play with words (I certainly do - it's probably occupational) why not make a pun, compose a poem, throw together a Letter to the Editor? *Invent* something, don't just muddy the waters of the language's superb vocabulary.

Janet D. Hine,
Mosman, NSW

Ed.- I'm glad you agree with my introductory statement in the May issue, i.e. the need for playing with words is an "occupational hazard" for indexers. It is not necessarily a shameful or destructive need. We can put it to good use.

The world-wide popularity of crossword puzzles, anagrams and Scrabble is no mystery. Neither is it a catastrophe for the human race. People enjoy them. Of course, they sell papers and help profits.

Crosswords give us much more than good clean *fun*. Good crosswords, especially cryptic puzzles, can rarely be solved without consulting a dictionary or other reference work. They motivate people to learn about the language and appreciate the shades of meaning that makes English such a rich and subtle language.

I personally owe much of my vocabulary to crossword-solving and Scrabble-playing. They have inspired me to spend countless hours understanding the nuances of words (even to the extreme of editing a newsletter about indexing).

I have yet to meet any person who reads dictionaries for fun or for edification. The human brain is not suited to absorbing information in such a fashion. Scrabble players learn words by semantic association. They extract meaningful "chunks" of words from the dictionary and often make up playful verses to remember meanings.

Two members have already asked if it would be possible to include an indexing-related crossword puzzle in a future edition of the *Newsletter*. That is a creative suggestion. Your suggestion to include puns, poems and more letters is also most welcome. Let's use all the possibilities that are available to us.

POSITIONS VACANT

Managing Editor

An experienced editor is required for the Australian Journal of Public Health, located in the Department of Public Health, University of Sydney.

The Managing Editor handles the practical management of the quarterly journal: administration, liaison with the honorary editor and editorial board, arranging reviewers of submitted articles, correspondence, copy editing, indexing, layout and design, arranging typesetting and printing, and liaison with Public Health Association of Australia's Canberra office for subscriptions and budgeting.

Applicants should be experienced technical editors, numerate as well as literate, efficient and organised, and have excellent word processing skills, ideally in Word Perfect. Experience or qualifications in health, biosciences, statistics and/ or social science are desirable.

Salary is on the University's administrative officer scale, starting at \$33,384 with annual increments to \$36,857 with excellent conditions. Please contact Juliet Richters on: telephone (02) 692 4377 or fax (02) 692 4179 for further details. Closing date for written applications 19 June.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Dr J. Goodell
6/44 Brisbane Street
Toowong QLD 4066

Mr. M. McMahon
5 Porter Street
Hampton VIC 3188

DEADLINE: JULY Issue
Contributions should reach the Editor at the address below by June 21, 1992. Contributions on 3.5" disks (preferably Macintosh format; Microsoft Word software) will be especially appreciated.

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