Australian Society of Indexers
NEWSLETTER

Stop the Press.....Hold the Front Page....

The Australian Society of Indexers has a new editor! After 12 months at the helm, Steve Sunter, due to other commitments, has decided to relinquish this challenging task.

Your new editor is Elizabeth Baratto. I look forward to editing this newsletter, judging by past issues, I have my work cut out for me. Steve has done a great job in keeping this newsletter factual, accurate, informative and entertaining.

This newsletter is pivotal in promoting the aims of the Australian Society of Indexers. I look forward to hearing from and liaising with members,with regard to indexing related topics and conveying these views and information.

Apart from the usual information on regional meetings and workshops, this month's issue includes Hans H. Wellisch's follow up article on Inverted Headings, Subheadings and Function words, information on the Federation Index 1889-1913 and a report on a book indexing workshop held in New Zealand.

'lucky Steve'

ACT News: Region Meeting

Geraldine Triffitt reports on the May 18th 'Meet the Indexers' meeting:

This meeting was a chance to meet Back-of-Book indexers. We had a panel of three indexers, the author Pat Clarke, scholar and ex-public servant, Robert Hyslop, and former librarian, Olga Howell. These three gave us a varied view of indexing, both in their method and in the type of material they index.

Pat Clarke described the different ways she had indexed her books. Her first books, _Governesses_ and _Colonial Women,_ about a number of women, had name and place indexes only. However, her book about Louis Atkinson required a much more complicated index, with cross-references, to reflect various aspects of her life. Her latest book, _Lifelines,_ an edited collection of women's letters, written in conjunction with Dale Spender required a detailed index to names, places, the roles and functions of the women, and concepts which were implicit in the text.

Robert Hyslop, whose latest book _Australian mandarins, perception of the role of departmental secretaries_ has just been released, gave some very practical hints to book indexing.

Olga Howell told some horror stories of disasters affecting indexes to government annual reports and stressed the need for the indexer to see the final version before publication. As government publishers now want the index on disk, the indexer must insist that their formatting is retained. She uses Microsoft Word on a Macintosh, which provides her with a search facility and spell check. She emphasised the golden rule of indexing is consistency.

GeradineTriffitt

ACT Regional Branch Functions

The ACT Branch is organising two functions for the following months:

A *'Meet the Database Indexers'* evening has been planned for Tuesday 22 June at 5.00 pm at the Griffin Centre, Room 1.

And a dinner meeting has been tentatively planned for August 24 at the Canberra Club. The speaker is yet to be announced.

Canberra Society of Editors Meeting: Report

This meeting was held on 28 April, Geraldine Triffitt attended and provided the following summary:

Members recommended reference books they used in editing. Some of these were dictionaries of aspects of English or guides to the usage of the language, others were subject specific. A brief description of the works presented appeared in the latest issue of *The Canberra Editor*. A final list of recommended references is being compiled.

During the meeting the Society's booklet *Freelance editors in Canberra, 1993-94 edition* was distributed. This is a very useful guide to anyone interested in indexing or employing indexers because of the overlap between editing and indexing in Canberra.

VIC Meeting:

Thesaurus Use and Construction/Database Indexing and Abstracting workshop

Victorian members please note the flyer enclosed with this newsletter outlining news about the Thesaurus Use and Construction Workshop/Database and Indexing for Databases planned for July 24.

George Levick and **Max McMaster** are conducting the workshops and would like to hear from all interested parties. Places are limited so be QUICK.

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 after 1990. It must have been compiled in Australia or New Zealand even though 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 that one category of words/phrases as index entries. It is requested, if possible, to please send a copy of the book, which will be returned.

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!.

Recommendations with bibliographic details should be sent to:

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

as soon as possible, but no later than **Friday 27 August, 1993.**

More on Inverted Headings, Subheadings, and Function Words.

Hans H. Wellisch

We include, in this month's issue, excerpts of Hans H. Wellisch response to Messrs. Siebel and Levick's contributions on this topic, (AusSI *Newsletter* vol. 179 no. 1, 1993) and (*ibid.*,no.2, 1993).

Mr Wellisch responds, "I am indeed quite "satisfied" with the phrase "optical illusions", as expressly stated on p. 43 of my book. What I am not satisfied with is the inversion of this phrase, which should be used in an index only as a cross-reference to the normal syntactic form of the phrase. As also stated clearly on p.43, the modifiers always precede the modified noun in an English compound term. That is the reason why neither main nor subheadings should ever be inverted in an English index. (The exceptions are terms inherited from the Normans in the fields of law, diplomacy and heraldry, e.g. attorney general, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, knight errant, and a few other such inverted terms that exhibit French, not English, syntax. All of them, however, are "in common usage".) The comparison of compound terms with personal names is a red herring: ever since the 15th century, when the custom of surnames became a widely accepted practice, it was realised that the number of surnames vastly exceeded that of modifying forenames, and that it is therefore more convenient to arrange lists of names by surname rather than by forename. In the Western world, it is only in Iceland that lists of personal names (such as the phone book) are still arranged by forename, because the people there do not have surnames but patronymics which change from generation to generation.

I agree, however, with Mr. Siebel that the wording of BS 3700 "Terms that exist in common usage" is indeed unfortunate because of its vagueness. What is meant (and exemplified) is phrases in which a modifier is often or almost always linked to a noun to express a single concept. Another awkward choice of term in BS 3700 is "hierarchy of main and subheadings" because the example simply shows an alphabetical arrangement of subheadings. The term "hierarchy" refers to only two entities, namely the main heading and the complete array of subheadings. Mr. Siebel erroneously assumed that the subheadings themselves were somehow meant to be hierarchically related which, of course, is not the case.

Function words

Since at the end of Mr. Levick's comment reference was made to my article in *Keywords*, I would like to explain its title and to reprint here its conclusions. Function words (a linguistic term) are those parts of speech commonly known in traditional grammars as articles, conjunctions and prepositions. They have no meaning when standing alone, but are necessary to indicate the function of other words and thus to give them meaning. They are therefore not at all "unimportant", least of all in indexes.

Articles are virtually never used as function words in subheadings, so they can be disregarded; among conjunctions, it is only "and" that may occur either at the beginning or in the middle of subheadings (and occasionally in the middle of set phrases when used as main headings, e.g., "husband and wife", in which case a cross-reference "wives, see husband and wife" should be made). The function words that sometimes give indexers headaches are the prepositions.

Essentially, there are three problems regarding prepositions in subheadings: when should they be used, where should they be used, and how should they be alphabetised. My recommendations are:
(1) Use function words sparingly in subheadings.
(2) A subheading that precedes its main heading syntactically does not need a preposition at the end, unless the modifying relationship would otherwise be unclear or ambiguous.
(3) A subheading that follows its heading syntactically needs a preposition at the beginning to clarify the modifying relationship.
(4) The conjunction "and" should preferably not be used in a subheading.

(5) Alphabetise all subheadings by their first word.

The last item contradicts the advice given in the *Chicago Manual of Style* in section 18.51, not to alphabetise prepositions but to file subheadings by "the first important word", to which section 18.100 adds:

> *If subheadings are alphabetised according to and, in, of and the like, the reader has to outguess the indexer, so to speak, while searching for terms: the choice of one such introductory word over another is often pretty arbitrary.*

My quarrel with this is not just a matter of divergent opinions. The quoted statement is actually untenable on linguistic grounds, and it also flies in the face of the results of research into the habits of index users. To take the linguistic argument first: most prepositions, especially those frequently used at the beginning of subheadings, have a unique function, that is, they are not arbitrarily interchangeable. As indicates in which capacity someone or something is related to the topic of a main heading; at indicates a location; by indicates an agent or action; for indicates a purpose; and so on. Only in and of, when indicating a possessive relationship, are sometimes interchangeable, as in the example I gave in my book on p. 310 (taken from a popular medical handbook and here slightly enlarged):

> bowel movement
> > after childbirth 248
> > in pregnancy 239
> > of babies 266
> > of elderly persons 271

The last two subheadings could as well have been

> > in babies
> > in elderly persons

However, the "principal" or "important" words following the prepositions are not unique. Quite to the contrary, the enormous richness of the English vocabulary that contains synonyms and quasi-synonyms for almost any concept results in a high degree of uncertainty on the part of users regarding the terms that follow a preposition in a subheading. The example shown above could have been formulated in any of the following variations (synonymous alternatives are separated by slashes):

> bowel movement / defecating
> > after childbirth / delivery / parturition

> > in / during gestation / maternity / pregnancy
> > in / of babies / infants / young children
> > in / of aged / ageing / elderly old people / senescents

Although some of these terms are less likely to be used than others (depending on the intended audience), they are all legitimate and possible substitutes for each other, whereas only in and of and the less often used during are interchangeable in this context. Hence, "the reader has to outguess the indexer" regarding the so-called "important" words, and not, as the editors of the manual claim, as far as prepositions are concerned.

Regarding index users' habits, an extensive survey, undertaken by INSPEC (the British database on physics, electronics and computer science) on the use of the indexes to what was then *Science Abstracts* yielded the following results. Thirty percent of all users (science librarians, scientists and engineers) scanned subheadings alphabetically; 24% scanned all initial words; and 63% scanned all subheadings under a main heading from beginning to end, which "may be explained by the user's realisation that a relevant document may be indicated by a phrase containing terms which he would not have thought of in advance" (Gould, 1974, p. 282). (Note that many respondents used more than one method of scanning index entries, so that the percentages exceed 100%). Thus, actual research under real conditions and not idle armchair reasoning confirms the futility of the advice given in the manual and the importance of alphabetising prepositions.

This also answers Mr. Siebel's complaint about my extensive use of the preposition "for" under the main heading "cross-references" and the ensuing "confusion". If a user wants to find those subheadings that deal with the purposes of cross-references it is only natural to look for those subheadings beginning with "for" which is the only suitable preposition indicating purpose. Users who wish specifically to find whether cross-references should be made for synonyms will find the answer either scanning the array of subheadings beginning with "for" or at "synonyms: cross-references for". No confusion whatsoever is generated, and

users are being served from every conceivable angle, provided they make the effort to scan all subheadings under a main heading--the only way to be sure that no modification has been missed, regardless of how it has been formulated. Of course, you can only lead a horse to the water, etc.

A corollary to the desirability of scanning all subheadings is that the array of subheadings under a main heading should not be too long, so that scanning them would not take too much time and effort. I have addressed this issue in another article (Wellisch, 1993) and proposed a rule of thumb, namely that subheadings should not occupy more lines than one half of an index column. Obviously, it will not always be possible to obey this rule, and exceptions to it will have to be made, particularly in legal indexes where four, five and more successive levels of sub- and sub-subheadings are not unusual, but if followed in most instances, it will ease the burden of the index user in scanning subheadings, and will also often avoid the unfortunate splitting of subheadings between columns or pages: the shorter the array of subheadings, the less the risk of its being split.

Finally, on a matter of terminology so as to give credit where credit is due. The terms "focus" and "difference" have long been used by linguists for what in general usage is known as "nouns" and "adjectives" or "modifiers" respectively, in a compound term. Derek Austin introduced these linguistic terms into the vocabulary of indexing when he explained the theory underlying his PRECIS index system, and I only followed his usage in those parts of my book that are based on the principles of syntactic analysis employed in PRECIS."

Notes:

1. "User preference in published indexes." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*" 25 (1974): 279-286.
2. Wellisch, Hans H. "Subheadings: many are too many?"(in press).

"What You See Is What You Key" The Federation Index 1889-1913

The Victoria Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages is currently organising the next stage of its index consolidation programme. This will follow on from the highly successful Victorian Pioneers Index (1837-1888) and will cover births, deaths and marriages for the period 1889 to 1913. The title of the new index will be the "Federation Index".

Volunteers to do the data entry for this important index are being sought by both the Australian Genealogical Institute and the Genealogical Society of Victoria. The volunteers will need access to a microfiche reader and to a personal computer.

Guidelines are being issued to each volunteer to ensure uniformity in the data entry process. The crucial phrase for the data entry is "what you see is what you key", as the volunteers are required to type in exactly what is written on the microfiche indexes. This requirement especially applies to abbreviations in the given names and place names fields where there is to be no expansion by guesswork of any abbreviation used in the original indexes.
The computer program to be used has been devised by Bruce Fullarton and contains several inbuilt editing features to standardise the method of data entry and to help eliminate errors. For example, the program will not accept apostrophes or full-stops, however hyphens will be permitted in the given name, surname and place name fields.

In the field for the registration number only numerical characters will be accepted, unless the number concerned has an alphabetical suffix, in which case a warning beep will alert the person keying in the data to double check the number.

If an error is made with the type of data entered, an error message is displayed on the screen and no further data can be added until the problem is rectified

Non-alphabetical characters will likewise not be acceptable in those fields dealing with names and places. These self-editing functions will eliminate time having to be spent "cleaning-up" the data after the initial keying has been completed and should

result in a speedier release of the "Federation Index".

Verification of the index entries will be carried out at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages by volunteers using keyboard terminals linked to the Registry's LIFEDATA computer system and checking each index entry against the original birth, death or marriage registration details.

As the audit progresses, events that were never originally indexed and therefore were not entered during the initial data entry process, will be included in the Registry index for the first time.

While it is not possible to prevent typographical errors from being made, the scope for such errors has been markedly reduced. The fact that every index entry will be verified against original registration details should ensure that the resultant "Federation Index" is of the highest possible integrity.

Any person wishing to volunteer their services for this important project should contact either Eril Wangerek of the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies or Andrew Billinghurst of the Genealogical Society of Victoria.

John Scarce,
Genealogical Research Officer,
Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria.

Teaching Book indexing in New Zealand.

In early 1992 the Society was approached by the New Zealand Library Association to run a short course in book indexing in New Zealand. No-one in Melbourne was available, so the Executive contacted the NSW Branch. It so happened that at the same time we had been approached to run a similar course in Canberra. Alan Walker and I jointly teach a course at the University of New South Wales, using teaching materials we have developed there. The UNSW was happy for us to teach the UNSW course in New Zealand and Canberra, and was willing to make the arrangements with their representatives. Since Alan has no marked abhorrence of Canberra, and I wanted to visit the old homeland, we decided that Alan would teach in Canberra and I in New Zealand.

After advertising throughout New Zealand, the NZLA decided to run the course once only, in Wellington. I made some changes to the teaching material we had developed at UNSW to incorporate some exercises with New Zealand examples, and the NZLA persuaded the Northland Development Commission to donate copies of their promotional booklet Focus on Northland to use as a classroom exercise.

The course lasted for three days, from Tuesday 15 September to Thursday 17. I arrived in Wellington on Saturday afternoon. I had accommodation at the course venue, a pleasant motor lodge in Johnsonville, a downmarket suburb on the fringes of Wellington. On Sunday I was taken by friends for a delightful visit to the Martinborough vineyards, not far from Wellington. On Monday I visited the NZLA offices and met Kaye Lally, the charming, helpful and incredibly efficient Continuing Education Officer, who had been instrumental in getting the course going. Together we created material to deal with New Zealand conditions (placenames, different type of government, Maori names and so on). Kaye told me that they had attempted to find someone from the Library School who could teach book indexing, but that no-one there had enough knowledge. Given that curious fact, it was surprising that no-one from the Library School attended the course.

Twenty-three people attended the course, from all over New Zealand. There were authors, librarians, and editors -- seven of them from Butterworths! The great advantage of such a cross-section meant that the students were able to learn a considerable amount from each other, and ask a wide range of questions.

The conditions at the venue were ideal (although its location was inconvenient), and the whole course was superbly organised. The students were most appreciative and enthusiastic -- so much so that I have been invited back to repeat the course elsewhere. Evaluation sheets completed by the students showed all the sessions were considered "very useful" or "quite useful". I was also also able to spend a few evening catching up on friends that I had not seen for many years.

Some comments from the students:
"Good balance between instruction and opportunity for participation ... You

made what could have been dull interesting"

"The course made me think about things in a new way, and I really feel as if I've learnt something"

"I found the course very interesting. Presentation preparation was great. Range of material covered excellent"

"You will now be our "guru" for indexing!"

The evaluation sheets also provided a number of useful suggestions for improving the course, not to mention my teaching methods.
I am most grateful to Kaye and the NZLA for the opportunity to "bring the word" to New Zealand, and to Kaye and to Maureen Henninger of UNSW for organising it all so smoothly.

Michael Wyatt.

LETTERS

Review of *Copy-editing*

In response to the review in the ASI Newsletter April/May 1993, I should like to make the following points:

(1) Elizabeth Wood Ellem states that she does not know why the index uses page number references and not section numbers. There are many reasons for this. Mainly I was not asked to use this style by the publisher; also usage of section numbers in indexes is cumbersome, lengthy and not very helpful - some sections are long and a subject may be difficult to pinpoint in this manner.

(2) the reviewer's spot-checks actually found what she was looking for. Entries in indexes are never going to please all of the users all of the time. I had used the word 'contents' instead of 'sequence' or 'order' as a subheading under 'preliminary pages'. There is always the possibility that Australian usage of some words may be different in England. She mentions the word 'citations' and 'references'. Are these synonyms in Australia?. 'Citations' in copy-editing

parlance normally means 'quotations' (i.e. quoting form works). Mentions of other people's books or articles referring to a section at the end of a chapter etc., are called 'references'.

(3) there is always argument about the use of prepositions. Personally, I do not think that their use in any way detracts from an index and in may ways can be helpful. There is no hard and fast rule on the matter and their omission can sometimes be very misleading.

(4) Finally I should like to point out that the previous edition's index won our Society's highest award, the Wheatley Medal, but was disliked by many users, i.e. copy-editors. This was one of the reasons I tried to make the index fuller and more easily accessible which should be the aim of all indexers.

Michele Clarke

CONFERENCES, Etc.

Women in Publishing
WIP are holding their 1993 conference on Saturday 10th July at the Australian Museum in Sydney. It will provide

participants with a great chance to meet and network with other women in the industry.

Further information: Robyn Lowe
                    Ph (02) 692 9087

Australian Book Fair

The ABPA Australian Book Fair on June 23-27, is already confirmed as a quality show. The five days will comprise of an exhibition (over 150 displays), seminars and an awards dinner. The venue is at the Sydney convention & Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour.

Further information: Sue Blackwell
                    Ph (02) 281 9788

Next Deadline - July 14, 1993

News, views and reviews are always welcome. Floppy disks will be appreciated where articles are longer than one A4 page (preferably 3.5" Macintosh disks; Microsoft Word software; IBM is also OK).

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