



# Australian Society of Indexers **NEWSLETTER**

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## Editorial

In this issue Glenda Browne reports on a potential problem area for indexers, 'Professional Liability'. There is news about the judges' decision concerning the 1995 AusSI Medal. Linda Rudell-Betts from ASI reviews the most recent standard guide to thesaurus indexing (courtesy of *Key Words*), and Dwight Walker continues his new series on Web Indexing which includes a prize. In this issue Dwight has included an opportunity for members to obtain Web Indexing 'tools' from him at a bargain price so as to enable all interested members to participate in the Web Indexing competition. Please note that the 1996 Subscription Renewal Form and the 1996 National Committee Nominations Form are enclosed. Members are asked to respond promptly to these. Garry Cousins continues his CINDEX series with an article on adding a preliminary note to an index. News of the National AGM and Dinner and of the 'Indexing in the Electronic Age' Conference can also be found in this issue.

Ann Philpott  
Editor

## 1995 AusSI Medal Judging Completed

The judging for the award of the 1995 AusSI Medal for the most outstanding index to a book or periodical compiled in Australia or New Zealand has been completed.

This year a record number of twenty-eight indexes were submitted for the medal. Entries fell into a number of usual categories, such as textbooks, reference books, scholarly editions and periodicals, and some less common ones, such as computer manuals.

Despite the submission of many competent indexes, no one index was considered to fulfil all the requirements of a medal-winner, and, therefore, the judges have reluctantly but unanimously decided not to award a Medal for 1995.

Two fine indexes have been highly commended.

Full details of the judging and the names of the highly commended indexers and others whose indexes were on the short list will be given at the Medal Dinner.

This year the dinner will be held as part of the 'Indexing in the Electronic Age Conference' in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales on Saturday 20 April 1996.

The 1995 AusSI Medal judging panel consisted of:

**Prof. W. Boyd Rayward**, Professor of Librarianship and Dean of the Faculty of Professional Studies at the University of New South Wales

**Janet Donald**, information consultant, editor and librarian

**John Nieuwenhuizen**, editor of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's *24 Hours Magazine*, and, formerly, publisher at Reed Reference Publishing

**Alan Walker**, freelance indexer, and a previous winner of the AusSI Medal.

# Professional Liability of Indexers

After being asked to sign a clause in a contract in which we accepted legal liability for the indexing we did, Jon and I set off on a quest to find out as much as possible about the legal responsibility of indexers, the risks, and professional indemnity insurance.

As many of you may require the same information one day we have written a brief report. This is in no way a legal opinion, but a summary of comments we received from a variety of people.

## How much risk is there?

People's perception of risk differed. Some couldn't imagine an indexer being sued; others were more cautious. It is not enough to have a purely historical view and look at cases which have already happened. There are changing trends in government contracts, and these are more likely now to 'pass the blame' than they were previously. Therefore, one might logically expect more cases against subcontractors and consultants than there have been in the past.

Another reason for caution is the fact that, even if you are finally found legally not liable, you may go bankrupt while fighting the case.

There are also some subject areas, such as law and medicine, in which the risk of being sued for damages for indexing work is probably greater.

## Contract risk versus common law risk

An indexer working without a contract has a duty of care, and is required to work at a professional level. It is assumed, however, that all indexers make mistakes, and these indexers only have to work at the level expected of a professional.

With a contract, on the other hand, you can be liable for all mistakes, even if any competent indexer could have made those same mistakes. Whether you are liable depends on the wording of the contract. If it says something like 'accepts liability for

all errors' it means you are liable, no matter how easy it was to slip into that error, and how many other indexers could have made the same mistake. It is worth being aware that with a contract you may have to perform at a higher standard.

## How can you minimise the risk?

You can refuse to sign the contract, in which case you may end up out of a job. You can get professional indemnity insurance to cover you in case of legal action but this is not affordable for small projects. You can only get a quote by filling in a proposal form with details of the work you do. We received two quotes, one, of about \$400, and the other, over \$1000. These policies work on a 'Claims Made' basis, which means that they only work for claims made against you (or problems notified to the insurer) while the insurance is current. Since the statute of limitations allows for cases to be brought up to seven years after the event, this means you need eight years insurance to cover you for one year's work. This may not even be enough, as some interpretations of the statute of limitations have apparently said that you can bring a case up to seven years after the error was discovered (rather than after the work was done).

The third way to minimise the risk is to become an incorporated company. This can be done through a solicitor or an accountant. It costs about \$850 in start up costs (plus professional fees), and you have a number of legal obligations, including record keeping. An incorporated company is only liable to the extent of its assets, unless the directors have acted inappropriately (e.g. borrowed money when they knew the company would not be able to repay). Incorporation may also have financial advantages for an indexing business.

## Have indexers ever been sued?

Two stories were discussed on the Internet. One was about a book indexer who mixed up two Robert Maxwells and was sued by one of them.

The other involved the *New York Times Index*, which was sued for the indexing of

an article which had been withdrawn from the newspaper.

### Where to get advice?

We started off asking indexing friends and colleagues, including some we had never met, for their advice. We posted a question on the INDEX-L newsgroup on the Internet, and received many helpful replies. These discussions were all useful in helping us to assess the risk and decide what to do, and we are grateful to the many people who shared their vast experience with us.

We spoke to a solicitor and accountant, and decided to set up an incorporated company. As well as helping you decide on a course of action, a solicitor can also explain the implications of all the sections of the contract. An accountant may be able to save you money, by recommending restructuring of your business (they can also cost you money).

For us this was a chance to re-evaluate a number of aspects of our business, and to network once again with those wonderfully supportive groups, the indexers of Australia and the Internet.

Glenda Browne

## Standards Watch: New Rules for Thesauri

*A review of ANSI-NISO Z39.19-1993 by Linda Rudell-Betts from Key Words The newsletter of the American Society of Indexers, Vol. 3, No. 4, September/October 1995, p 10-11 (Edited and reprinted with permission.)*

Anyone who has compiled a thesaurus knows that the mental challenge of establishing relationships between terms and presenting them in a useable format can be a one-way road to brain damage. Without standards such as the *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri*, the streets would be littered with babbling lexicographers, perplexed indexers and searchers. Standards give practitioners an agreed upon set of rules which, when applied consistently, allow users to utilise varying resources, knowing that the

structure and intent are pretty much the same between them all.

The trail of Z39.19-1993 has been an arduous one. The standard was circulated for comments beginning in 1990; the finished product was approved in 1993 (hence the date that is part of its title) and was finally published in 1994. In this reviewer's eyes, the long path parallels that of the changing road in information retrieval in general.

Increased automation demands more intricately designed retrieval tools, one of which is the thesaurus. The new standard includes items on maximising the potential of using computer utilities, both in the construction of the thesaurus itself, and in end-user navigation and display.

The publication is quite easy to navigate. Not only is there a complete table of contents outlining the structure of the standard, there is a fine index: four pages-plus for 43 pages of text. A glossary is provided and those terms within the text that are defined are clearly underlined to alert the reader that the term is in the glossary. The appendices illustrate various thesaurus displays, both print and electronic, and provide references to authoritative resources that might aid in the thesaurus construction and maintenance. *See* references dot the standard, which is quite helpful when one's question is not fully answered by a particular section or when a section raises another question for the lexicographer.

The scope of the standard is made very clear in Section 2. After thoroughly defining what a thesaurus is in Section 1, the standard enumerates in language that resembles legalese what will be covered. For other considerations that might arise, users are referred to appropriate sources; for instance, users with questions regarding establishment of proper names are referred to the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd ed.

As for the core of the revised standard, it greatly expands upon Z39.19-1980. Each section and, indeed, sub or sub-subsection, includes clear examples to illustrate what the standard is requiring of the lexicographer. For example, regarding



'Term Form', the earlier standard stated that

*each term included in a thesaurus should represent a single concept (here, 'concept' means something conceived in the mind, as defined by Webster); however, the concept may be expressed by a single word or by several words.*  
(Section 4.2, p. 10, ANSI Z39.19-1980)

This does not pass my '4:30 PM on a Friday test', which is: Can I understand this definition late in the afternoon, on the last day of a long week, and apply it to the situation to which I have gone to the standard for guidance? The revised standard clearly states eight types of concepts (Section 3.3, 3.3.1) and gives several examples of each. It passes the test.

The foreword states that the 'current revision borrows heavily from the corresponding international and British standards' (p. viii). This reviewer experienced a case of *deja vu* when initially perusing the standard, but it was not unpleasant. I have been using the international standard up until now because it treated the intricacies of thesaurus construction more thoroughly than *Z39.19-1980*.

Like the international standard, the 1993 guidelines allow for the 'whole-part' relationship. *Z39.19-1980* had prohibited the 'whole-part' relationship in all but the most exceptional cases because it would 'result in multiple hierarchies for a significant proportion of terms, thereby significantly increasing the complexity of the thesaurus' (p. 14, *Z39.19-1980*). Digital displays can make up for confusion caused by poly-hierarchy and can exploit the 'whole-part' relationships to great advantage when one would need to search all divisions of a concept as is noted in Section 7.3.3.

While Section 6 covers print display, a factor that was well covered in the international standard and was briefly presented in *Z39.19-1980*, Section 7 is entirely devoted to screen display of the thesaurus. Special attention is given to thesaurus user categories and the needs of each type of user. The lexicographer is encouraged to exploit the power of computing to display the thesaurus in its

various forms and also reminded of special considerations, such as whether free-text database structure might retrieve unwanted single-word descriptors, or typography that might conflict with search commands. The latter is one of the rare inconsistencies I found in the standard: Section 3.7, 'Capitalisation, Punctuation, and Nonalphabetic Characters', does not make reference to machine retrieval problems that can arise from use of punctuation or nonalphabetic characters. The issue is addressed in Sections 7.5 and 10.1, but the importance of knowing the structure of the databases in which one will be indexing or searching the thesaurus descriptors should be stressed in the sections describing the form for descriptors.

Sections 8 and 9 discuss thesaurus construction and maintenance. Again, the revised standard expands upon the earlier standard, although one might well consider consulting the sources Appendix E, 'Bibliography of Manuals on Thesaurus Construction' before embarking on a new construction project. These texts delve into the complexities of thesaurus construction in a more leisurely manner than is allowed in a standard. Of particular note is Section 8.1, 'Avoidance of Duplicate Work', where the lexicographer is advised to 'ascertain...whether an existing thesaurus covers the same or overlapping domain of knowledge.' *Z39.19-1980* does not make this point. Using the work of others as a starting point gives the compiler a leg up during construction. Another hint of increased sanctioned collaboration in the thesaurus community is evidenced in Section 8.9.3, where the lexicographer is advised to deposit printed editions of the thesaurus with an appropriate clearinghouse.

Another welcome new section is 'Thesaurus Management Systems', Section 10. The standard sets guidelines for software developers and those who will be selecting systems. If the thesaurus management software meets the criteria enumerated in this section, the lexicographer should have a package that will be flexible enough to meet all term manipulation, display and verification needs.

*Z39.19-1993* is a 'must have' document for any lexicographer. The standards

committee - which was chaired by former ASI president Bella Hass Weinberg - is to be commended for their diligence in presenting a thorough and understandable treatment of a complicated process.

*Linda Rudell-Betts is an information science consultant in Los Angeles who specialises in access vocabularies to databases. She has compiled both print and electronic thesauri for use in indexing and information retrieval. She is a member of ASI and very active in ASIS.*

**ANSI/NISO Z39.19-1993**  
**Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri**  
(ISBN 1-88-124-04-1) is published by NISO Press, the publishing program of the National Information Standards Organization, a non-profit consensus standards developer in the US accredited to develop American National Standards by the American National Standards Institute. Z39.19-1993 is available from NISO Press for US\$49.00. All orders outside the US must be charged to Visa/Mastercard. The book will be shipped first class/airmail. Send orders to:  
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**Next Newsletter deadline:**  
**Tuesday 20 February 1996**  
Contributions and letters to the Editor are always welcome  
Floppy disks will be appreciated where articles are longer than one A4 page. My computer only accepts formatted 3.5" Macintosh Microsoft Word Version 4.00D disks. I do not have easy access to fax or email. Please send all contributions to:  
The Editor  
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1/6 Scheele Street  
Surrey Hills. Vic. 3127

**Forms for 1996 AusSI Subscription Renewal and Nominations for the 1996 National Committee are enclosed in this issue. Members are asked to respond promptly.**

## CINDEX Tip N° 9

### Adding a preliminary note to your index

It is possible to add an introductory note in CINDEX, although the amount of control you have over its layout is very basic, compared to that of a good word processor. However, the note can be of as many lines length as you wish, and include typographical features like italics and bold.

This is done by entering the text of the note as an ordinary entry in CINDEX, but prefacing the text with special characters which force the entry to sort to the very top of the index. For example, to insert a note like:

Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations  
first go into ADD and begin a new entry by typing an opening brace, several zeros, and a closing brace: {000} Using zeros will force the entry to file at the very top of the index, before any other alphanumeric characters in the index; the braces hide the zeros from view. Follow this with the text of the note:

{000}Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations

Some dummy records can also be created to insert space between the note and the first entry of the index:

{001} < > and  
{002} < >

The {001} and {002} will make the entries file after the note, and the spaces in angle brackets will display as blank lines. Press <Esc> to go back to the command line and check the result in VIEW/FORMAT by pressing F8.

*If you have a tip for other CINDEX users, or a problem, write to the Newsletter or contact Garry Cousins Voice/fax (02) 9955 1525*

# Web Indexing Prize: Part 2 A bibliographic index

## The Competition and Prize

This is the sequel to the simple Web index last month. It is what the main form of Web indexing will be.

The prize: A year's free membership to AusSI.

The competition: Create a bibliographic Web index. The winner's index will be mounted on the AusSI Web site.

## The Background to Bibliographic Web Indexes

As Webmaster, I was approached by an academic at Melbourne University, Steve Hunt, who has suggested indexers could make money indexing small portions of the Internet. They need to be computer literate and have access to the Internet. As a service for their clientele, they could update the index on a regular basis for a set fee.

It is becoming more and more important to index the Internet as even the best search engines often turn up spurious information. Dozens of false hits are generated as the search engines often do not have adjacency operators and return hits say only when two words occur in the same document, whether alone, side by side, or in the right order.

It may seem a pretty arid and untapped area but the returns are high. With a much higher hit rate, people will be more likely to use the Internet. Indexers will become sought after! Currently, I am losing my patience with the endless hours of searching required to find correct information. It is a jungle.

As support for this, I have created an area on the AusSI Web site called 'the art of indexing the Internet'. This holds links to sample indexes of sites, for example, *The whole Internet catalog* by O'Reilly & Association publishers.

## How to get on top of HTML

The main tools you will need to construct the final product are those listed in my article in the last issue of the AusSI *Newsletter* plus:

HTML Writer (Windows) or a similar HTML editing program to touch up indexes.

HTML is a markup language. It consists mainly of tags. Most of them come in pairs, one to switch on the feature and one to switch it off. Many tools can automate creating these tags.

When creating links in HTML Writer, there are buttons which will prompt you for a URL. You just highlight the subject heading with the mouse, click on the 'create a hypertext link' button then type in the URL when prompted. HTML Writer produces all the correct HTML details - no worries. You do not have to be a HTML whiz to do this. Keep one heading per line and it will be tidy and readable. Using the 'create a hypertext link' button you can also create hypertext links for *see* references as well.

## Creating the Bibliography

How can you find material to insert into a Web index? Here are a few sources:

- 1) there is a source of electronic journals at the National Library of Australia and the University of California San Diego Library (with ARL, Yale, CCAT-UPenn);
- 2) another source is the gangling list of Usenet newsgroups, for example, [comp.infosystems.www.announce](http://comp.infosystems.www.announce);
- 3) some could be obtained from work, for example, cataloguers using thesauri on the Internet; and
- 4) from surfing the Internet.

More next month.

## Web Bibliography:

*Indexing the Internet* by Mike Middleton, AusSI 1st International Conference, Mar-Apr 1995: <ftp://ftp.fit.qut.edu.au/InfoSys/papers/asindex.wp5>  
*AusSI Internet Indexing Page*: <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/inetindx.html>



NFAIS indexing organisations: <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/nfaisinx.htm>  
Webcrawler search engine: <http://webcrawler.com>

Telstra's Meta-Index of search engines:  
<http://www.telstra.com.au/metaindex.html>

Australian Electronic Journals by National Library of Australia: <http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/ausejour.html>

NewJour electronic journal mailing list archive (ARL, Yale, CCAT-UPenn, UCSD): <http://gort.ucsd.edu:80/newjour/>

Dwight Walker

## AusSI Web Indexing Prize Tools Order Form

To enable you to write some Web indexes, I have created a series of disks. To order your copy, photocopy and complete the following form and post with a cheque for \$5.00 made out to Dwight Walker to Dwight at the following address:  
Dwight Walker, 2/1 Nelson Street, Randwick NSW 2031  
Email: [dwight@zip.com.au](mailto:dwight@zip.com.au)  
Telephone: 02 3986726 (h)

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### Web Indexing Prize Windows and DOS Tools

Please tick the programs you require:

- WEBIX for DOS and for Windows (freeware)
- Netscape for Windows 1.2 (shareware)
- HTML Writer for Windows 0.4 (freeware)
- Trumpet Winsock for Windows 2.0 (used with Netscape) (shareware)
- PKZIP for DOS 2.04G (shareware)
- 1.44MB disks or
- 720KB disks

Minimum hardware: 386DX25, 8MB RAM, 4MB hard disk (6MB to install), Windows 3.x.

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## Advertising rates

### AusSI Newsletter

Full page: \$80  
Half page: \$40  
Quarter page: \$20

### AusSI Indexers Available 1995/96

Full page: \$100

### The Indexer (UK)

Full page: 120 pounds sterling  
Half page: 80 pounds sterling  
Quarter page: 55 pounds sterling  
Eighth page: 35 pounds sterling  
There is a special order form to be completed when lodging advertisements in *The Indexer*. For order form and copy deadlines, please contact: Janet Shuter, Hon. Editor, The Old Chapel, Kings Rd, Bembridge, Isle of Wight, UK. PO35 5NB  
email: shuter@cix.compulink.co.uk

## 'Indexing in the Electronic Age' Conference 20-21 April 1996

This conference is being conducted by the ACT Branch. It is directed to all people in the information industry whether they are indexers, editors, publishers or users. A diverse group and some interesting debates are therefore anticipated. The speakers will be a range of non-indexing specialists who will bring participants up-to-date with developments as well as giving their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges for indexing in the electronic age.

A highlight of the conference will be the 1995 AusSI Medal Dinner, which is being arranged by the NSW Branch.

The conference will be held at Ranelagh House, Robertson, in the picturesque NSW Southern Tablelands (about two hours drive from Sydney and Canberra). The total cost is \$185.00 for early registration by 15 March 1996. The cost covers attendance at the conference, accommodation at Ranelagh House and meals, including the AusSI Medal dinner.

For details and registration, contact Shirley Campbell: tel. (06) 234 2225, fax (06) 234 2237, email Shirley.Campbell@Radford.act.edu.au