LETTER FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT. Garry Cousins, the new AusSI President, discusses priorities for the future.

Looking back

The first thing I should like to do is pay tribute to Alan Walker for his three years as President. Alan was not only the first national president from NSW, but he presided over a period in which Standards Australia adopted ISO999 as the Australian standard on indexing, and in which the indexing societies around the world signed their first international agreement. Alan was instrumental in both of these developments, and was also responsible for initiating our first contact with the China Society of Indexers in 1999. Thank you, Alan.

Looking forward

What do I think are the important issues and events for the Australian Society of Indexers in the next twelve months? Among the most important, it seems to me, are:

1. Registration of database indexers: Until now, by historical accident rather than design, database indexers have been unfairly excluded from the Society's registration process. I think we should try to address this anomaly with some priority. Max McMaster and Margaret Findlay in Melbourne have already taken the initiative of preparing a proposal for the registration of database indexers and I look forward to working with them on this matter, along with a representative from the ACT branch. The registration of database indexers is important for a number of reasons:
   a) it remedies the anomaly of excluding database indexers from the register
   b) it enables the Society to recommend database indexers in good faith
   c) it provides a standard where none now exists for database indexing. Once established, this standard could provide a measure of competence for prospective employers of database indexers. It could also be an incentive for more database indexers to join the Society.

2. Indexers Available: I would like to see registration become a prerequisite for appearing in Indexers Available and if I can find a consensus among members, I would like to see this become Society policy. I do not believe the Society can recommend indexers in good faith unless it has had a chance to see and assess their work.

Database indexers have rightly objected that restricting entry in Indexers Available to registered indexers discriminates against them, because the means do not yet exist for them to become registered. Obviously, therefore, the registration of database indexers must happen before we can make registration a prerequisite for appearing in Indexers Available.

3. Canberra conference, April 2001. This conference is being held by the ACT Branch in conjunction with the Canberra Society of Editors. Planning is already underway. Mark your diaries now (or, as I read recently in an MCA brochure, diarise this date).

(Continued on page 34)
Noticeboard

New members
Welcome to the following new member:
Anya Woods, Vic

AusWeb2K
AusWeb2K, the Sixth Australian World Wide Web Conference, 12–17th June 2000 Rihga Colonial Club Resort, CAIRNS, Queensland.
AusWeb is hosted by Southern Cross University. It offers papers, posters, tutorials, workshops and special interest group meetings in most areas of web research as well as public and e-commerce activity. The conference uses technology to provide pre-conference information and to create opportunities for dialogue, questioning and networking throughout the conference.
The conference aims to bring together a wide cross section of Web researchers, developers and users. Full conference details, including secure online registration, are available on the Web site at http://ausweb.scu.edu.au or by contacting the Conference Secretary at Norsearch Conference Services - email ausweb@scu.edu.au or by phone on 02 6620 3932.

NSW Society of Editors
Meets monthly (usually first Tuesday of the month) at Judicial Commission Conference Centre, 5th floor Wynyard House (just above Wynyard Station) at 6.30 for 7.00. Cost $15 including drinks and light eats.

Indexing cookbooks
Members of the American Society of Indexers are in the process of establishing a Special Interest Group (SIG) for indexing cookbooks.
International membership is encouraged.
The Culinary Indexing SIG is an educational forum and a network for experienced and novice indexers interested in culinary indexing in various media, such as books, periodicals, CD-ROMs, and web sites.
The SIG serves several functions. As an educational forum, it provides opportunities for members to ask questions and brainstorm about technical culinary indexing problems. It may make available actual instruction by experienced culinary indexers. As a network, it gives members access to information about publishers, authors, editors, and others who need culinary indexes in various media, such as books, periodicals, CD-ROMs, and web sites.
Members also can use the network to find other culinary indexers to whom they refer projects. Network outreach to potential clients seeks to promote awareness of SIG members’ competence, experience, and availability.
This new SIG has already attracted much interest. As of 31 March 2000, 38 members had subscribed to the SIG listserv at onelist.com, and several more people had expressed a desire to belong. Among the early joiners are one from Australia and one from New Zealand.
The contact person is Kathleen Spalatro, winfrank@mc.net.

SI Conference
The next SI Conference will be held in Cambridge, England from 14 to 17 July 2000.
Credit card bookings can now be made, and an updated booking form is downloadable from the SI website at www.socind.demon.co.uk or by email from Jill_Halliday@beckvale.globalnet.co.uk.
Noticeboard

Victorian Branch workshop

Workshop, Tuesday, 11 July 2000

Gavan McCarthy, Director, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, University of Melbourne, will conduct a one-day workshop for the Society on:

Indexing of Web Resources

When: Tuesday, 11 July 2000, 9.00 am to 4.45 pm
Where: Computer Laboratory, University of Melbourne, Parkville
Cost: $143 for AusSI members ($165 for Non AusSI members) incl. GST
Prerequisites: Knowledge of, and experience in indexing

Enquiries: Jenny Restarick via email jenny.restarick@enquiries.csiro.au
tel: 03 9545 2178 or fax 03 9545 2175 (work hours)
or at home 95282539 fax/phone after hours.
Closing date: 8 July 2000. Mail application form with cheque to: Australian Society of Indexers, GPO Box 1251, Melbourne 3001.

Application form

Indexing of Web Resources - Workshop, 11 July 2000

NAME:
ADDRESS:

TEL:
FAX:
EMAIL:

Knowledge and Experience in Indexing

Victorian Branch meeting

General meeting, Tuesday, 16 May 2000

Wayne Dawes, Chief Finance Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, will speak on:

GST: Be ready for July 1, 2000

Wayne has prepared ACER for the introduction of GST on July 1. ACER has contracts with many consultants and freelance professionals so he understands the requirements of the new tax for indexers working on contract.

When: Tuesday, 16 May 2000, 5.30pm for 6.00pm (Drinks and nibbles at 5.30pm)
Where: Australian Council for Educational Research, 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell (a short walk South from Camberwell Station)
RSVP: Jenny Restarick via email jenny.restarick@enquiries.csiro.au
tel: 03 9545 2178 or fax 03 9545 2175 (work hours)
or at home 95282539 fax/phone after hours.

From the editor

It is with great pleasure this month that I publish the first of Garry Cousins’ Letters from the President. If you have ideas about any of his priorities let Garry or other Committee members know.

We replaced our lounge room carpet with cork this week. It looks lovely now, but it is one of those disruptions that a freelance business can do without.

For the next few months I will be working one day a week as a librarian at Westmead Hospital. Since indexing lacks much human contact this is a nice break. It is such a good library that it is also a pleasure and a challenge. Even in the few years since I last worked there things have changed. Many databases on CD-ROM have now been replaced by access through the intranet and/or Internet.

Cheers, Glenda Browne
(Continued from page 31)

4. April issue of The Indexer. As part of an international rotation, AusSI is taking its turn to produce the April issue of The Indexer in 2001. Glenda Browne and Alan Walker are our Editorial Committee, but would welcome any help from interested members. If you have an article/letter/anecdote/cartoon/review which you would like to contribute, or if you would like to help somehow with production, please contact Glenda. This is your chance to make your mark in our international journal!

5. The GST. The GST will affect all of us significantly, and freelancers especially. The Society is not qualified to give advice on so complex a matter, but it can continue to hold meetings and publish relevant material in the newsletter, both of which can be useful adjuncts to advice from professionals.

6. New blood. The Society has been administered by virtually the same dedicated groups, both national and state, for some years now, and AGMs often resemble a game of musical chairs. For the health of the Society, as well as the sanity of long-serving members, we need new members, but we also need existing members to come forward and join our state and national committees. If this idea interests you, please contact me. We can offer you congenial monthly meetings, and much more!

Garry Cousins, President, March 2000

From the Literature

Lite Internet text


Indexers hope, and expect, to play an important role in making information on the web more accessible. To do this most of us will need to expand our role to include navigational methods beyond traditional indexing, and we will have to learn more about the nature and design of information on the Internet. This makes Anne A'Herran's article relevant to our potential role.

She writes: 'In converting text for the Internet writers and editors first organise the content...Extracting it is...like giving birth to a chair.' Instructional designers map information and offer alternative pathways through it.

The information has to be organised so that users can easily recognise the main concepts while seeing only one screen at a time.

You can't just put text online. It needs to be shortened and simplified—'stripped to its essence' to entice readers to continue. The trick is to write briefly without leaving important and interesting things out.

Another means of reducing text is converting it to an image. Interestingly, promotional language has been found to create a cognitive burden as readers have to filter through the rubbish.

Rural Australian Computer Terms

Society of Editors Newsletter (Vic) March 2000
(copyright holder couldn't be traced).

- Log on: Make the barbie hotter
- Monitor: Keep an eye on that barbie
- Download: Getting the firewood off the ute
- Floppy disc: What you get from trying to carry too much firewood
- Search engine: What you do when the ute won't go
- Upgrade: Steep hill
- Server: The person at the hotel who brings the counter lunch
- Mail server: The bloke at the hotel who brings the counter lunch
- User: The neighbour who keeps borrowing your stuff
Carole Leita's Tips and Tricks for the Wired World talk

I attended a seminar run by ALIA Information Science Section (www.alia.org.au) on the 29/3/00 in the theatre of the NSW Parliament in Macquarie St, Sydney. It was very helpful.

Carole Leita is the librarian at Berkeley Public Library (http://www.infopeople.org/bpl/). She developed a set of bookmarks about 10 years ago called Librarians’ Internet Index (LII - www.lii.org) which she published at the Web site of the library to give access to free online information for the mostly poor local community—students! It then grew and grew.

She got State Government funding and started using the site (1) to arrange a growing number of links on her site with a focus on California and (2) to provide distance education for librarians and the public in outlying areas in California with IT skills like Word, Excel and Access in a scheme called InfoPeople (Internet For People)—http://www.infopeople.org/.

In the last year or two, Bill Gates has donated several million dollars worth of Microsoft products including Microsoft Office on Windows NT to libraries right across California. These were used on a cost recovery basis to educate the public and the librarians in IT skills and provide computer literacy state-wide.

The scheme for editing the Librarian's Internet Index is using volunteer editors via the Internet. A link is submitted which is then vetted by a subject editor in the group. Each editor who wants to volunteer to edit a group of links is given a username and password to the online database hosted on Sunsite Berkeley—http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/. A wealthy volunteer programmer has set it up using Perl and SQL and a free onsite search engine called SVVISH developed by VCB.

They then log in and add to or edit existing links. Each link has a name, URL, keywords and short description. See the www.lii.org site for examples.

Carole then gets these submissions and accepts or rejects submissions to the site. The LII is totally database driven. All the pages are database generated. As a result no search engine can index these pages. However at the meeting Madeleine Davis from AusSI and AustLII (http://www.auslII.edu.au/) suggested they get a copy of SINO the AustLII search engine to improve their site-wide indexing. SINO stands for Size Is No Object!

I also told her about my efforts at WWWalker and AusSI in Web indexing which she bookmarked for inclusion! She was very impressed by the AustLII site with its mountains of free indexes to large amounts of legal materials across the world. BAILII has just been released which is an index to British and Irish legal materials.

In California, other public libraries have co-branded the LII site and used it as a portal for their library. That way they have their name on it but they use LII's structure.

Librarians at the meeting were keen to share information like this in Australia. Currently most universities or public libraries tend to have their own subject gateways and not consolidate like the LII has done. This has snowballed the effect of having shared information. People all across the world can suggest links for the LII. The only local thing is that the content must be hosted in California and give credit to the California government since it is paying for the libraries in the first place. May be we in Australia could have a similar scheme for our public library network. I know Sydney's MPLA (Metropolitan Public Libraries Association) is planning something like this. I trust this has whetted your appetite for community based Internet indexing efforts. Some librarians like the ones at the UNSW were keen to get a sponsor or some other commercial involvement so that it does not disappear when Carole retires which may be in the near future. May be WWWalker or a similar Web oriented company could do something here, who knows? There is an opportunity for a partnership here.

Afterwards about 20 of us had a lovely dinner at Chatts Restaurant. Carole told me she had a T1 connection at home as her flatmate worked with the University of California Berkeley and they were testing a new microwave link!

Dwight Walker WWWalker Web Development

Knowledge management seminar
Dept of Information Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney, Ernst & Young and Knowledge People (a division of One Umbrella - aka Library Locums) are presenting a knowledge management seminar:

Date: Tues 20 to Wed 21 June 2000
Location: The Mercure Hotel, Central, Sydney
Cost: $500 AUD
Book Review:

Anthology for The Millennium


Available through the Society of Indexers, Globe Centre, Penistone Road, Sheffield UK S6 3AE.

Reviewed by Jonathan Jermey

"This anthology is a collection of writings about the past, present and future of indexing and indexers at the turn of the year 2000..." - so the preface by Doreen Blake describes the purpose of this publication. There are 44 articles of a page or so each; some are more or less technical, like 'From Information Chaos... to Future Control' by Jan Ross, while others are personal reminiscences or tributes to indexing colleagues and champions. Bernard Levin gets an article, as do Henry B. Wheatley, Gordon Carey and G. Norman Knight. There are whimsical pieces and snippets from unusual and illustrative indexes, as well as verse, haikus and a letter from an indexer's dog. There is a Subject Index of two-and-a-half pages, or 3.8% of the volume, and an Author Index to conclude.

Some of the material will be familiar to Australian indexers through other sources; some of it is limited in interest to anyone but Society members. But as an addition to the history of indexing, and especially its British connections, the book is welcome.

The fifth paper in this series is soon to be published and covers indexing of children's books. Other titles deal with indexing biographies, legal materials, medical and biological sciences, and newspapers, magazines and other periodicals.

Reviews of the occasional papers on the indexing of biographies and periodicals will be published in this newsletter in future issues.

The Cambridge Sidelights Review

The SI conference will be held from 14 to 17 July at Homerton College, Cambridge. Topics include trends in the publishing industry, picture libraries, newspaper indexing, health of the homeworker, email newsgroups, software development of context-based searches and intelligent searching, electronic indexing issues, workshops for active participation in a variety of topics and more. There is free time as well as organised trips to the Fitzwilliam Museum special collections and the Botanic Gardens.

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Letters

Reply to the article 'AusSI Web Indexing Awards for 1999'

I read with great interest the reviews of the three web indexes submitted for an award. Particularly since I submitted (but did not write) the Case In Point index I did need to address an aspect of this index that was omitted from the review which was a main reason for its submission.

Once you have taken a link from the index to an article, the bottom of that article's page contains the usual links to various areas of the web site. However, there is also a special, highly visible link called KEY-WORDS.

This link takes you to one of several web pages that list the article citations and the various keywords (actually the main headings) under which each article has been indexed. At this point you can then link back to a different main heading in the index than the one that originally took you to the article.

N5:3: "Creating an Acquisitions Contact Strategy"
   Customer acquisition
   Customer contact strategies
   Lead generation
   National Change of Address (NCOA) processing

Return to Article

This feature creates a true web of links between the indexing and the article. The index thus is not just a separate or distinct path into the articles but via the keywords you have access back into other parts of the index that were thought important to a specific article.

I hope that people will take some time to check out this "reciprocal" type of index since it adds more value to a web site than the standard "one-way" index does.

Dave Ream, Leverage Technologies, Inc.
Cleveland, OH

Hey! What about me?

I noticed in the March Newsletter that there was mention of a couple of Society members giving papers at the 9th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry, to be held in Perth in September 2000. My immediate response to this item was 'Hey, what about me?' I too am giving a paper at this Congress, not about indexing, but entitled 'Sex, violence, and the family historian'.

I know that I have kept a very low profile in the Society but I think I was member 53 when I first joined over 20 years ago. I still enjoy attending the meetings of the ACT branch, even though I have now retired from my position as curator of the photographs collection at the Australian War Memorial. I do occasional consultancy work in the history and cultural heritage areas. And I always look forward to reading the Newsletter.

One very successful indexing project which members may like to know about was one undertaken by volunteers from the Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra (HAGSOC), of which I am a past President. They indexed over a period of about eight years the parish registers of the Anglican diocese of Canberra-Goulburn, held in the National Library of Australia. I supervised this project wearing my two hats, one the Manuscript Librarian at the National Library, and the other a member of the Society's Council. The project was completed some years ago, but was taken a step further last year when the index, containing over 125,000 names, was published by the Society on microfiche. It indexes the names of brides and grooms for marriages, parents and child for baptisms, and the deceased person in the case of burials.

The project was started before the release of the helpful Registrar General's indexes to births, deaths and marriages. However, we know that many of the early entries do not appear in the NSW Registrar General's records. The index, on 11 microfiches, is available for purchase ($50) from HAGSOC at GPO Box 585, Canberra ACT 2601.

Pam Ray

Sidelights editor

The [British] Society of Indexers newsletter, Sidelights, now has a new editor - Beverley Winkler. Her email address is: abwinkler@aol.com if you would like to send any news to her.
Of Literacy and Turtles, Jean Dartnall writes from Lae, Papua
New Guinea, of her experiences.

So there I am on a dinghy, of the type locally called a
banana boat, with the outboard pushing us across the
mouth of the Markham River towards a village called
Maus Buang. We are the Lae Explorers Club
weekend trip hoping to see turtles nesting. Resting my
eyes from the wonderful coastal mountain scenery for
a moment, I take a quick glance round the contents of
the boat, nine ‘explorers’, sleeping bags, mosquito
nets, assorted bags, billums
and eskies, and among them a
box, bigger than the biggest of
the eskies, and labeled
‘literacy kit’.

It took two weeks of
investigative journalism to
find out something about the
literacy kit. It was carried
onto the boat by the man
from the crocodile farm but
he had had it for only a brief time. Before that it had
been in the shed of the transport company that is part
of the same industrial group as the crocodile farm. It
had been there for at least seven years, as far back as
my informants go. The kits contain almost a basic
packed up primary school, exercise books and rulers,
teacher’s notes and reading materials, posters and
charts. They had presumably come into the country
as part of some aid project and been forgotten, a sad
thing and probably a waste of resources that are badly
needed. Fortunately that is not the end of the story.

The manager of the transport company found the kits
while cleaning out, decided they needed to be used
and set about ensuring that it happened. Both in his day-
to-day work and with the Lae Explorers Club, he travels
about the country. Whenever he has the space, he takes
a literacy kit to a village that hasn’t had one. Now the
resources are being placed in the hands of those who really
need them. A typical PNG
story in a way. Nothing happens quite as you expect it
to and yet there are as many positives as there are
negatives. For example, we didn’t see any turtles but
had the most glorious long walk on the beach under a
perfect full moon.

Indexing Ermyntrude and Alphonse

An enjoyable discussion on Index-L started with Mary
Mortensen’s note regarding the ire of Steven M.
Wise, author of Rattling the Cage: Towards Legal
Rights for Animals when he found that animals, in-
cluding his companions, Marbury and Alice (a dog
and a cat), who had been mentioned by name in the
book, had not been indexed.

Wise apparently ‘went through the roof’ and
re-indexed the book himself, ‘so that the dolphin
Kama now has equal billing with humans like Lewis
Leakey.’

Mary wrote wondering whether she would have in-
cluded the animal names in the index. She concluded:
‘I think I would have, but it’s easy to say that now’.

Jerry Frohman mentioned the importance of knowing
the intended reading public, and says ‘I would like to
think that I would have indexed the book as:

Alley (cat)
Alphonse (amoeba)
Bowser (dog)
Ferdinand (flea)
Kama (dolphin)

and so forth, and on and on...’

Simon Cauti told of an indexer (not him) who made
an entry for a car called ‘Ermyntrude’, which was a
leading character in one part of the narrative. Unfortu-
nately, he reports, ‘the author of the biography was
not amused, and the entry – alas! was deleted’. GB
From the Literature

Robert Dessaix on professionalism


When I first read this essay I thought it was particularly relevant to the debate about professionalism in indexing. Now I am not so sure, but I still think it is one of the best essays I have read, so I offer a taste to you.

Dessaix discusses dilettantes—originally rich, disinterested, systematic, supporters of the arts, and notes "At the end of the twentieth century, the idea of anyone, however rich, being 'disinterested' is so foreign to us that the very word has had to find something else to do: it has attached itself to 'uninterested', hoping none will notice the difference."

He feels that the expanding professional classes traded in certified knowledge, and resented nonprofessionals getting involved in the arts. The status and income of professionals depended on their 'accredited competence'.

He says: "Perhaps it's time professionalism was deconstructed" and quotes Edward Said, who suggests a return to amateurism as a way of avoiding the negative effects of professionalism. To him amateurism means the pursuit of knowledge simply for the love of it.

The negative effects of professionalism, according to Said, include the deadening effects of overspecialisation, and what he calls 'the cult of the certified expert'. When you are certified by the proper authorities to be an expert you must speak the right language, cite the right authorities, and hold down the right territory.

One trouble with 'professionalism' is that it is a word now used to mean pretty much what the user desires. Although it is formally defined with criteria such as a group of workers with a shared body of knowledge and ethical standards, it is now used as an alternative to quality ('Our hairdresser offers a professional service'). The pure virtues of professionalism can also be lost among the personal desires Dessaix mentions such as money and status.

I feel indexers avoid the problems mentioned above because indexing, while a highly specialised skill, is very general by its application to all subjects and many formats. Also, I believe our assessment for registration has avoided the imposition of authority without reason. GB

From the literature

Southern African Indexers

We have recently started exchanging newsletters with the Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers. The latest issue I have seen (No. 8, Jan 1999) gives details of a meeting about indexing programs at which Macrex and CINDEX were demonstrated by their users, and a demo version of SkyIndex was downloaded.

There is also news of a digital imaging project to index magazine and newspaper images of 'Struggle' literature going back to the 1960s.

The newsletter also contained a copy of a letter from a professor at the University of Lesotho (Lesotho is a small mountainous country fully enclosed by South Africa) who has compiled an annotated bibliography of Lesotho for over 25 years! There is also a 320-page Lesotho Water Resources Bibliography, published two years ago. Finally, the newsletter has an ad for a South African subject thesaurus.

Since I was born in South Africa (I have lived here since I was two) I have enjoyed this new international connection.

Thesaurus construction

If you are interested in thesaurus construction, check out the book below, reviewed in the August 1999 issue of Australian Library Journal.

What we need now that thesauruses are becoming popular for use with metadata, is a good book on the practical implementation of thesauruses on the Internet and intranets. Does anyone know of one?


Standards for Electronic Thesauri

Key Words vol 8(1) Jan/Feb 2000 contains the report 'Standards for Electronic Thesauri Report to the ASI Board on the Joint Workshop sponsored by NISO, ASI, and ALCTS', by Kate Mertes.

The workshop agreed electronic thesauri do have special needs; Z.39.19 should be enhanced or extended to cover their requirements; relationship schemes would benefit from standardization as long as it allows for the creation of special needs relationships; and vocabulary management rather than vocabulary control is crucial. Jessica Milstead is writing up a full report, which will be available on the NISO Web site. GB
This newsletter is sent free to all members of the Australian Society of Indexers. It is published 11 times a year, with a combined issue for Jan/Feb. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society.

Copy should be sent to the editor by the last day of each month for publication in the middle of the next month. I am delighted to receive contributions, both large and small, from members. Please contact me if you have any questions about suitable items for publication. The editor reserves the right to cut and edit material.

If greater than one A4 page, please send files on a disk or via email in Rich Text Format, Word for Windows, or plain text (ASCII).

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