There were 33 responses from indexers and 49 from editors. This report only deals with the responses from indexers. Analysis of the part of the survey that covered editors is available from the Canberra Society of Editors web site. Most survey forms were filled in at the conference, but since then, members of both professions who didn’t attend the conference have sent in responses. This is not a large sample; it wasn’t a scientifically controlled survey, and there were the usual problems of inconsistent form completion. All the same, the questionnaire results provide a benchmark that can be used as the basis for future investigation. They also give us some clear messages from an active proportion of national membership. All regions except South Australia and the Northern Territory are represented in the survey and there was one international response (New Zealand).

Here are some of the other descriptive findings. Indexers are an aging group: no respondents were under 25, and only one was in the 26–35 group; 27% were 36–45, 33% 46–55, and 51% over 55. Interestingly, this is not true to nearly the same extent for editors. While both indexers and editors are feminised occupations, the gender imbalance is less pronounced for the indexers who responded to this question, of whom 27% were male and 73% female.

Indexers are highly qualified: all respondents had an undergraduate degree, and 21% had a masters degree. Over half (54%) of respondents also had another postgraduate qualification, mostly graduate diplomas and also graduate certificates. 79% of respondents had also undertaken specialist professional development courses.

Of the respondents who answered the question on experience, the largest group (42%) had more than 10 years’ experience as an indexer (39% had between 1 and 5 years, and 15% had between 6 and 10 years).

Many reported other relevant professional experience. The most commonly cited prior occupation was librarian (19), followed by editor (6), researcher (4) and writer (3). Other experience included proofreading, project officer, bibliographer, public relations, trainer/manager, research assistant, architect, lexicographer and historian.

45% of respondents were part-time indexers; 27% were full time and 7 of the 33 did indexing in addition to other employment.

67% of respondents (22) were primarily back-of-the-book indexers; most of the others were database indexers. Also mentioned were

Continued on page 95
New Webmaster
The National Committee has appointed a new Webmaster, Emeline Haight, who will take over the position from Jonathan Jermy in January 2002. Emeline is a Web Librarian with the Department of Education in Tasmania, and has a background in botany and fine arts as well as information science. We welcome her to the position and hope her incumbency will be a happy one.

Jonathan will continue as AusSi Publicity Officer and hopes to devote his extra time to running a membership drive.

Recommended Rate
The National Committee issued the following statement on 31 October 2001, to take effect immediately:

The Australian Society of Indexers recommends that the minimum hourly rate of pay for freelance, self-supporting, registered book indexers, working on short-term contracts, be $44.00 per hour, not including GST.

The Society recommends that professional indexers working as freelance database indexers, or in other areas where remuneration is on a piece-work basis, should be paid a rate equivalent to the hourly rate recommended for registered freelance book indexers.

In reaching this decision, the committee considered economic indicators affecting the running of freelance indexing businesses, including recent increases in the consumer price index and gross domestic product, and the effects of tax reform in the past year. Rates of pay for comparable professions in Australia (librarians and editors), and recommended rates for indexers overseas were also considered.

The new rate represents an increase of 4.4 per cent on the previous rate of $42.00 per hour, set on 26 October 2000.

Alan Walker
President
Australian Society of Indexers

New member
The Australian Society of Indexers warmly welcomes Ms Susan Hacker of Alexandra, Victoria

NSW Xmas Lunch
The annual lunch for NSW members will be held in the Sydney Mint Cafe, on Thursday 6 December at 12.30 pm. The Sydney Mint Cafe is in the historic precinct of Macquarie Street in the heart of the CBD. The Mint is the oldest classically detailed building in Australia. Enjoy lunch with fellow indexers on the wide sandstone verandah.

Prices are reasonable, with main courses in the range $11 to $14. The cafe is licensed.

Over lunch we will discuss plans and set up a committee for the international indexers' conference in 2003 which the NSW Branch has agreed to organise. If you are interested in helping with the conference but cannot attend the lunch, please inform Alan Walker on 9368 0174 or president@ausi.org.au.

If you will be attending the lunch, please inform Carolyn Kearney on 9351 0293 or c.kearney@library.usyd.edu.au, by Tuesday 4 December.

Alan Walker
President
Australian Society of Indexers

News from the ACT Region Branch
The Branch will host a Christmas barbecue brunch to be held at Black Mountain Peninsula on Sunday 9 December from 9.00 am to midday. Partners and families are welcome, as are any indexers visiting Canberra. The charge is $5.00 per head and the Branch will provide basic food and drink. There will be a mailout to confirm these details for ACT members.

On 14 November the ACT Region Branch co-hosted a joint meeting with ALIA ACT and District Health Forum on 'Using metadata to create navigation paths in the Healthsite internet gateway'. Members of the Healthsite Editorial Team summarised their project and demonstrated the various means of access. There was discussion on several issues, including the management of indexing quality and consistency, search engine capability and the costs of doing evaluation research. About 30 people attended and the discussion was lively and useful.

Edyth Binkowski
AusSi ACT Region Branch

86 Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter
Copyright Agency Limited (CAL)
The Australian Society of Indexers are now members of Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) as publishers. As part of this arrangement we are part of the CAL joint venture licencing agreements with the National Library and RMIT Publishing for online delivery of content to specialist subscribers. Our membership to CAL offers benefits which include: Centralised Licencing of the right to copy our works, at commercial rate, where it would be impractical for us to do this. If our works appear in copying records kept for CAL, they will notify us that we are entitled to claim money for that copying from their distribution.

- Representation by collecting societies similar to CAL, in countries such as UK, USA, NZ, and Canada, in the same way those societies represent the interest of their members.
- Representation of our interests in areas such as copyright law reform at a national and international level.
- Access to a contact and referral point for our copyright problems.
- Information on matters of concern to authors and publishers eg through a regular newsletter.

AustLit Calendar

AustLit Gateway Opened
The release of AustLit: Australian Literature Gateway marks a new era for research and discovery in Australian literature; http://www.austlit.edu.au. Did you know ...:
- that Patrick White and his work have been the subject of over a thousand critical articles and reviews?
- that Judith Wright's 'Woman to Man' is the most anthologised poem in Australian Literature?
- that Ivan Southall's children's novel Ash Road has been translated into over 15 languages?
- that John Clarke uses more pseudonyms than any other contemporary Australian writer?

AustLit: Australian Literature Gateway is a unique service offering answers to these and many more questions relating to Australian literature. AustLit offers libraries and researchers a single entry point to authoritative, constantly updated information on more than 60 000 Australian authors and more than 360 000 works of Australian creative and critical literature. AustLit has just been released for free trial until the end of 2001.

The AustLit Gateway is a visionary collaboration between eight universities and the National Library of Australia. AustLit uses cutting-edge technology and information management models to enhance resource discovery for the teaching of and research into Australian writers and writing. AustLit contains detailed information for students, teachers, researchers and others interested in the national literature.

Users can access rich biographical information, enhanced bibliographic description using sophisticated search strategies, together with a Library Holdings facility based on links with Kinetica, the National Bibliographic Database. The AustLit Gateway also provides access to a growing number of full-text documents and electronic resources, including scholarly electronic Australian Literature texts produced by the University of Sydney Electronic Text and Image Service (SETIS); electronic journals and their contents; and a range of quality websites relating to Australian writers and their works. Once copyright release arrangements have been finalised, AustLit's full-text component will increase significantly with the addition of a substantial body of full text documents, including selected criticisms, reviews, electronic publications, and out of print literary works.

Free access is available at http://www.austlit.edu.au until December 31, 2001. From January 2002, AustLit: Australian Literature Gateway is available to institutions, consortia and individuals by annual subscription. For subscription enquiries and consortia proposals contact EBSCO (ess-au@ebSCO.com).

Note: that the Advanced Search function and the Email facility are not currently available but will be very soon.

We welcome comments and suggestions for improving our service during the beta testing period. Users may notice significant changes to the site layout, search and results pages as we respond to user feedback. Please contact us at: info-austlit@austlit.edu.au with your comments and suggestions.

Manager
AustLit: Australian Literature Gateway
Email: info-austlit@austlit.edu.au

October/November 2001
Seminar on Indexing Software

Held at ACER, Melbourne, on Saturday 18 August 2001

Nearly twenty participants, mostly tertiary students, attended this seminar, together with five presenters and some committee helpers. Jenny Restarick, President of the Victorian Branch of AusSI, introduced the topic and invited participants to join the Society if they had a serious interest in indexing. John Simkin gave a brief talk on the history of indexing, recalling the trials of card indexing, and pointing out the advantages of indexing on computer, using one of the four packages that would be demonstrated during the afternoon.

CINDEX was described by Frances Lennie. CINDEX is available for Windows (95 and higher) and Mac, and has five full-time support people at its home base in 100 Allens Creek Road, Rochester, NY 14618, USA. CINDEX can do just about anything. It can convert pre-existing indexes, databases, index websites, glossaries, mailing labels. It has been used by librarians for cataloguing books and newspapers. It has resolved the longstanding problem of updating legislation indexes, and Canada has used it for indexing Hansard. More information can be obtained from http://www.indexres.com. I can't recall a price being mentioned, and with the variable Australian dollar, one needs to check this information on the website.

Michael Wyatt described SKYIndex, which can index almost anything, being limited only by the size of the hard disk. Michael is the moderator of the SKYIndex list. Some of the highlights are the ability to use up to 40 macros with a single stroke and the type ahead facility for which the user keys in the first few letters that will expand to full entry. SKY indexes can be viewed in three different orders. The price on 18 August was $US535 plus $US12 for international postage for version 6 (earlier versions are cheaper). SKY Software lives at 350 Montgomery Circle, Stephens City, VA 22655, and you can find more information at http://www.sky-software.com. Contact info@sky-software.com.au or call 02 9913 7799.

Max McMaster (03 9500 8715; mindexer@interconnect.com.au) is the Australian representative for MACREX, which was developed in the UK by Drusilla and Hilary Calvert, and has been updated frequently in its 20 years of life. Originally it was DOS based, but is now available for Windows 95/98/2000 and NT versions. It is easy to use. MACREX can be converted into a final form of Word or Wordperfect for printers. The price on 18 August was $A275 for AusSI members. It can be sent to indexers by email or you can download it. Purchase of any version entitles you to excellent advice from Max for the first six months.

Jenny Csorba (jennifertgitdm.com.au) and Micky Ashton described InMajic DB/TextWorks. Originally developed to catalogue books in libraries, it is constantly being developed and improved. It is available in DOS and Windows. Users tend to be librarians cataloguing newspapers and museum collections and it is used for databases. Micky is using it at present to work on a tourism project.

After these brief descriptions of the software, the participants were free to tour around the four computers and see them demonstrated and trial them for themselves.

Elizabeth Wood-Ellem

From the Editor

In this combined issue we reproduce several more papers from the Canberra 'Partnerships in Knowledge' combined indexes/editors conference; reports from the Branches; book reviews from here and abroad; and Glenda Browne's literature review. It's the silly season and it would be great to see as many of you as possible at the various Xmas celebrations. Deadline for our last issue of the year is 30 November.

All the best,
Frances Paterson
On Thursday 25 October, a dozen members of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Society of Indexers were treated to a fascinating tour of the Exhibitions and Collection Management Departments of the National Gallery of Victoria. Meeting at their temporary location in Macaulay Road, North Melbourne, within the premises recently completed for the State Archives, we were greeted by Donna Noble and Gordon Morrison, Head of Department, with a detailed schedule of areas to visit and staff members to give us demonstrations of their work areas and answer our constant stream of questions.

Gordon gave us a general overview of the history of the collection and of its relocation from the St. Kilda Road premises whilst the buildings there are undergoing renovation. This was a prime time for a thorough stocktake because the Australian collection will be housed in the new gallery on Federation Square which is nearing completion, whilst the remainder of the collection will be moved back to St. Kilda Road.

Robyn Hovey and Linda Misuraca explained to us the procedures of Registration and Accessions. They maintain records of receipt, an Insurance and a Loans Register, plus Accessions information. The receipt number of every item follows the history of the object as it moves through the NGV. Hard copies of these forms are required for auditing purposes. The Registration staff are trialling printing from the database, i.e. entering details straight on to the computer and then making paper copies, rather than vice versa, as is current procedure.

Helen Puckey, Manager, Collection Database, explained how the NGV uses the Vernon Collection software to set up a skeleton record, which is then added to for tracking (using Receipt number); accessioning (date based numbering system) and identification (unique identifier number only). Location information uses mnemonic codes to describe storage areas etc. The NGV chose Vernon because it was operated by a small company and is thus quick to respond to any problems. It is a standard retail product and thus has a large user group of clients who keep in touch via email and can encourage the provider to make enhancements or changes to the software. Because of the size of the collection, and consequent size of its database, the NGV has encouraged and trialled upgrades prior to their commercial release. Amendments such as the use of 'circa' and 'active' in recording dates of artists or their works, are examples of refinements the NGV has contributed to the system.

At this date only some entries contain visual images, although it is anticipated that these will increase as funds allow. A Conservation module within the software allows for inputting details of artist, provenance, size of installation when hung, et c. It is anticipated that in future, touch screens will be available for public use. Meetings of the Board of Trustees approve acquisitions, both purchases and donations.

David Belzyczy, Manager, Cataloguing, took us into the 'small room' to show the hard copy guides to the collections. These folders are divided into two sets - Australian and International, and then are broken down into type of collection e.g. Furniture, Decorative Arts, etc. Within each folder are plastic sleeves containing photographs, biographical information, CVs, exhibitions information, etc. of each item held.

The Australian Cataloguing Manual (1981) by Therese Varveris is used to compile a catalogue record as it provides many enhancements to a MARC record, such as physical details, sub-types of genera, period, for example, Porcelain, Byzantine, Ceramic. However, there are still difficulties in determining an artist's country of origin, the name of a country or area which has undergone change, either political or geographic or ethnographical. Added or see entries are provided to cover variations. The main criteria for an entry is to describe the work as the artist/maker named it, and in the style, period or country in which the work was performed. No de-accessioning has been done since the 1950s, however some items may be lent out on long term loan. Works by young Australian artists are kept for 15 years in a special Development Collection, after which time they are reviewed and either retained or returned to the artist. Standard reference tools are used to establish correct entries for makers' and date marks. Labels which appear on display cases, etc. are more general in nature than the specific entries for the same work in the catalogue. Standard templates are used for both forms of entry.

We were treated to a photographic setup of a beautiful porcelain vase, which had been taken out of its protective wrapping to show us how these images were taken. A special backing was placed behind the vase to enable both the physical dimensions of the object, and the amount of space required to display it, which were then calculated prior to being added to the catalogue entry. Next we were shown the huge loading bay area which will remain as NGV space even when the collection moves out, as a storage area will be retained at Macaulay Road.

Walking down the corridors we entered the Picture Storage Rooms and saw the custom built containers of various shapes and sizes used for transporting items around and outside the country. And now for the pièce de résistance - racks and racks of pull-out stacks containing the magnificent collection of paintings held by the NGV were all there before us! Some items were being reframed, or repaired but the mind absolutely boggled to see these 10 ft high roll out 'fences' covered with old masters and modern paintings, some remembered from childhood visits or from books of prints. How fortunate we were to be able to view the 'hidden treasures' of the Gallery, and what a wonderful visit this had been to an unknown part of the National Gallery of Victoria. We were very grateful to all the staff we met for their time and enthusiasm, and fitness (walking those corridors every day does have its benefits!).

Jenny Restarick
President
AusSI Vic Branch
1 Your business has an ABN and is registered for GST. You invoice a client in the normal way but they pay only the amount you charged for your services, not the GST component. In your BAS, do you list this item as a non-GST item? Under what circumstances is your client legally justified in not paying you the GST component?

2 Your business is currently registered for GST. Around half of your work (indexing and/or editing) is for private clients who are end users and so cannot claim GST inputs. These clients pay 10% less if they use the services of your competitors who do not meet the $50,000 pa threshold and therefore do not charge GST. The other side of your business is for large government and corporate clients who expect you to be GST registered. In fact they would regard you as a less than serious contender who expect you to be GST registered. You would regard this as a less than serious contender for tenders if you didn’t charge GST. Your turnover is close to $50,000 pa. It would be a simple matter for you to expand or contract your business a little so that you were just over or just under the cut-off point. What should you do? In making this decision you want to make a good business move and one that is professionally satisfying.

3 You have a client who is a Korean national resident in New York. All work is carried out via email correspondence. Should you charge her GST? Under what circumstances is GST payable on exports?

4 You are asked to edit a postgraduate thesis and you establish that this will be done in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the university concerned (acknowledgement of the role of the editor, knowledge and consent of the supervisor). When you begin the task, you realise that there are major conceptual problems with the thesis draft. It is not simply a question of language style and grammar. You have a background in the discipline concerned and know that you could assist the student with more than your copy editing skills. How do you handle the situation?

2 You are asked to revise the index of a publication for a second edition. You did not compile the first index and are concerned about the ethical issues involved. Does the original indexer have intellectual rights over the content of their earlier index? Are you benefiting from their work without acknowledgment (or payment) if you use the first index as a ‘shell’?

3 You have compiled a book index when the client makes substantial last minute revisions to the final typeset manuscript. Tables are placed on different pages, whole sections are deleted and others inserted. Virtually every page is affected. You advise that the index must be started from scratch. The client is not prepared to pay for the time involved and asks you merely to index the new sections and make whatever changes are possible for a specified cost. Do you reject these new terms, even if it is made clear to you that refusal means no further work from this client?

4 You are asked to edit (or index) a manuscript on a subject in which you have a strong background. In the course of the job, it becomes clear to you that much of the material that is being presented as the original work of the author is in fact plagiarised. What steps do you take?

**Ethics**

*Presented by Basil Walby, Society of Editors, Victoria*

*Devised by Pamela Hewitt, Canberra Society of Editors*

You are asked to edit a postgraduate thesis and you establish that this will be done in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the university concerned (acknowledgement of the role of the editor, knowledge and consent of the supervisor). When you begin the task, you realise that there are major conceptual problems with the thesis draft. It is not simply a question of language style and grammar. You have a background in the discipline concerned and know that you could assist the student with more than your copy editing skills. How do you handle the situation?

Copy editing improves the text rather than rewrites it. The author’s ‘voice’ must come through. The editing corrects errors of grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation and ensures that the intention and meaning are clearly expressed. Copy editing ensures that style (house style or style developed for the work in hand) is consistent; ensures that references and bibliography are complete and layout and format conform to style; and oversees proofreading and consequent amendments.

Proofreading corrects spelling, punctuation and typographical errors; ensures that cross-references are complete; and ensures that style and format are consistently applied.

There was discussion of some examples of usage and style and of some Microsoft Word devices which help editors especially in keeping track of changes when editing on disk or on-line. Probably the most useful part of the workshop was the description of a number of tools which are important for Australian editors and proofreaders. Some of these are listed below. The handouts included a breakdown of copy editing tasks, a sheet of examples of proofreading marks and a brief proofreading aptitude test.

**Bibliography**


A workshop entitled 'Database indexing' begs the question: Why index a database? Databases have search facilities built in, don't they? Isn't that the point of them?

It turns out that database indexing is not indexing of databases but indexing for the main public bibliographic databases, such as APAIS (Australian Public Affairs Information Service (now part of APAFT – Australian Public Affairs Full Text)), Streamline, NCJRS (National Criminal Justice Reference System) and others. In this nicely-paced workshop, Lynn Farkas first introduced her audience of seven librarians, indexers and editors to the concept of database indexing and then showed us where it fits in the knowledge continuum. She outlined the sub-categories of database indexing and the skills or qualities a database indexer needs for effective work.

After a coffee break, we had a go at this business. It had sounded quite easy to do when Lynn explained it earlier. In practice, of course, it wasn't easy at all. Try to summarise the main points of an A4 page magazine article in 1.5 minutes, never having seen the article before! (The time limit reflects the amount of time a working indexer can afford to spend absorbing the article.) Then turn that into an abstract. It's clearly possible in the time, once one has experience at it, and we had some success in capturing the essence of the text at first attempt.

Then Lynn handed out appropriate thesauri and we searched them for keywords that would describe the article. For an editor who has not seen this kind of thesaurus before, this was less straightforward than preparing the abstract. Thesauri have been compiled and published particularly for database indexing, and they focus on special subject areas, such as public affairs, water, criminal justice. The intention is that all indexers will use only particular keywords to describe the information in their sources, and so simplify the subsequent retrieval of that information from the database.

However, the keywords we first searched for were generally not in the thesaurus, and a flexible brain was required to think of synonyms that might be findable.

I enjoyed this workshop very much and it stimulated me to try out Streamline and other databases, and to want to pick up this skill professionally.

By the way, I've found a terrific list of databases at Charles Sturt University's web site, although you do have to belong to the university use the links.

Ann Milligan
Science Text Processors Canberra.
Registration of database indexers

'Partnerships in Knowledge' Conference held Canberra 20-23 April 2001

Sandra Henderson

During this conference I've heard some interesting comments to do with registration. During John Simkin's session on Friday afternoon someone asked 'Has the quality of book indexing improved in Australia since registration of back-of-book indexers has been around?' In the same session Alan Walker noted that in the US there are significant numbers of indexers who wouldn't touch registration with a barge-pole.

I've heard several editors express a view that development of a system of accreditation of editors is a path they must go down. Last night Max McMaster said, in accepting his Medal, that there are a number of very competent indexers who are not members of the Society (and who by implication are therefore not eligible to be considered for the medal). Equally, I know of competent database indexers who are not members of the Society. Perhaps the lack of a registration process is one reason these people have for not joining — one of the things they can point to as a failing of the Society when they think 'What's in it for me?'.

What is registration?

So what is it we are trying to achieve and why?

What's registration and what are the benefits? Why do the database indexers want to belong to this secret sub-society of 'registered indexers'? (The issue of web-indexer registration is no doubt just around the corner.) If an indexer is working as a freelance or in-house database indexer, meeting the requirements of their employer in terms of speed, quality and consistency, what does registration offer? Registration in a professional sense can be defined as 'an impartial, third party endorsement of your knowledge and expertise by a respected professional body' (from the South African Board of Personnel Practice). Many other definitions mention the words 'assuring competence'. Being a registered indexer is not necessarily a guarantee for clients that all your indexing is of an excellent standard, but it should guarantee them that your indexing is of an acceptable standard and that you know what you are doing.

Registration is often linked to professionalism. In many jurisdictions it is illegal to practice as a doctor, lawyer, dentist, engineer and so on, if your name does not appear on a state or country register of like professionals, and the registration process is tied up with completion of recognised educational courses, some amount of professional experience, participation in ongoing continuing education, and acceptance of a professional code of conduct or code of ethics. Linked to this is a process by which registration may be withdrawn for unethical or incompetent practice. However, there are also a range of occupations where registration is not mandatory, and some, like indexing, where even the basic educational achievement is not mandated. We are not the only occupation struggling with the issue of registration and how to achieve it. The peak bodies in those occupations wonder if they are indeed a profession. And that you know what you are doing.

Registration may be seen as a process which raises the status of the profession by assuring the client community about qualifications, standards and quality of practice. It is a step towards maintaining and gradually improving standards of practice, and it is to be hoped that the history of registration of book indexers has gradually improved the overall standard of book indexing in this country.

Other societies

What happens in other societies?

In the UK there is a system of accreditation and registration of back-of-book indexers, with education criteria specified for the accreditation level, and registration as the higher level achievement. There is no accreditation or registration of database indexers, or web indexers — indeed these newer mutant varieties don't seem to be much in evidence in their society.

In the United States, as has been mentioned earlier in the conference, there is no system of accreditation or registration of indexers. As has also been said before at the conference, there is much opposition to the idea of any regulation. However, the issue is not dead, it is raised at the conferences of the American Society of Indexers, and Kate Mertes is writing a paper on the issue for their conference in May 2001. She does not sound overly optimistic that anything will be achieved, but supporters of the concept do not want to let it die. The Canadians, similarly, have no system of registration.

Progress

For over twenty years AusSI has been registering back-of-book indexers. In fact the Society's constitution says that a register of indexers will be kept. It is the practice of the Society to recommend only those indexers who are registered.

The lack of a process for the registration of database indexers thus places the Society itself in an awkward position. There are no indexers registered as database indexers (although some registered back-of-book indexers such as Max are equally capable in the field of database indexing). So how can the Society recommend an indexer to an organisation seeking a database indexer (and the clients are generally organisations, not publishers as is the case with back-of-book indexers). Indexers Available is made online from the Society's web pages — and database indexers are listed — and people seeking a database indexer do use it as a means of locating possible indexers. If someone is
contracted to do indexing because they are listed, and their work is not competent, this reflects badly on the Society despite any declarations that the listing does not imply recommendation for unregistered indexers.

Those of us who’ve been to Marysville, Robertson and Katoomba know that the issue of registration of database indexers has been raised at each of those conferences, at least in informal discussion sessions, with everyone going away muttering that it’s all too hard. However, after the most recent Hobart conference where it was discussed yet again, a small working group was convened (electronically) to work on developing a proposal. There was a succession of ideas and refinements passed around by email between the working group members (Garry, Max, Margaret and myself). We’re now at the stage of having a proposal which needs the comments of the wider database indexing membership before we proceed any further.

Proposal

What is being proposed?

The document as it stands starts with a statement of the purpose of registration. These are:

- To assist employers to select suitable indexers for database work through a recognised accreditation process
- To provide a benchmark for database indexers to evaluate their own indexing skills and competencies
- To provide a measure of competence for the Society in recommending database indexers.

The more difficult issue, that of the criteria for assessment, has been the subject of much consideration, and will no doubt provoke much debate. The criteria suggested are:

- Education/training course attendance, e.g. appropriate indexing component in an information management course; specialised training in an AusSI database indexing/abstracting course
- Considerable experience in database indexing/abstracting of text/image material. This requires the use of both subject analysis as well as subject indexing. Subject cataloguing alone is not sufficient
- Assessment on sample. This would involve both subject analysis and assignment of keywords using both thesaurus and non-thesaurus tools; and abstracting.

It is suggested that the sample be two batches of ten records, one batch to be indexed using a general thesaurus (such as APAIS) and the other to be indexed using a specialist thesaurus. The applicant would have a choice of specialist thesauri out of a limited group of options.

Not all of the above criteria would need to be met. A very experienced indexer may be exempted from one of the above.

Verification of education/training course attendance and/or database indexing experience would have to be provided, from educational and/or employer institutions.

There are, not unexpectedly, some problems with the criteria. The national committee of AusSI is concerned to keep some degree of parity with the registration for book indexing, and at present registration of book indexers is on a single criterion, although it has recently been expanded somewhat. However, the basis of registration is still the examination of a completed index, and there is no requirement for educational qualifications or substantiation of significant experience.

There is no standard curriculum in educational institutions, and the indexing component of information management courses can vary from brief mentions to intensive practical work. The Society has no role in the accreditation of any courses in database indexing, so it is legitimate to base registration on attendance at a course. It is also the case that at least in the past, many database indexers were subjected to very informal in-house training, based on a single database, by people who had also received no formal training.

There are quite a few more-than-competent database indexers who’ve spent their whole career indexing for a single database, or working in a very specialised area. Is sample indexing using a generalist thesaurus a useful measure of their indexing skill in this case? Some indexers have worked for years with a database or databases which do not require abstracts — should they be disadvantaged by this?

There is also a proposal for continued professional development and re-registration after ten years. There are no such requirements for book indexers. Whatever the merits of a re-registration process for either book or database indexers, would the Society’s limited number of assessors be able to cope with this? The reaction of the national committee was that trying to achieve this for book indexers would be impossible given the limited resources available in terms of assessors. What are the opportunities for continued professional development?

This is much easier for an indexer in a large government organisation where training and development are valued and funded, less easy for those in other organisations or freelancing. The nature of some database indexing is also very specialised, limiting the value of many development opportunities.

It is proposed that a panel of three assessors carry out the process. How are these people to be chosen in the first instance? Who assesses the assessors? While there are quite a number of experienced database indexers in Canberra and Melbourne, the same is not true for Sydney or other centres. Does this matter? Would the panel of assessors have to be physically present to administer a sample indexing process, or could this aspect be looked after by a single assessor?

As I thought about this I also wondered about some of the closely related activities undertaken by database indexers. These will include database management without actual indexing, a process of maintaining the database over time at a high level of consistency — not measured by the proposed criteria but a skill most experienced database indexers would be expected to have. The development and maintenance of thesauri and authority control is also a key component and almost inseparable from the main work of an indexer or database manager. Even those using a thesaurus maintained elsewhere frequently undertake variant forms of thesaurus work — maintaining authority lists of terms used to enhance the thesaurus at a local level or to populate the other fields of a database. Should there be some recognition of this part of a database indexer’s work?

As you can see this is not a cut-and-dried subject. What the Database Indexers Registration working group has done is think about the most pressing issues, put forward a proposal, and your comments are welcome.
Review

Editing Online Help


I recently reviewed the book Editing Online Help for the Canberra Society of Editors, and thought a small part of the review might also be useful for indexers. To my knowledge most online help indexing is done by technical writers, but there is no reason that more help teams shouldn't employ indexers, and, one day, you might find this practical book very useful.

Content

The author writes: 'This book is intended for students, writers and editors who are developing online help for computer software, and for their managers and clients ... This book supplements tool-specific instruction by presenting the basics of help content development, regardless of the operating system running the application, the type of help being produced, or the tools used to produce it.' Examples are from Windows, but the principles apply to all software platforms.

The book discusses the planning of online help projects, the ten most common complaints that users have with online help, and ways to diagnose and solve these problems. There is one chapter on contents pages and indexes, with examples of real life indexes, both good and bad. The nine chapters take 102 pages, and are followed by nearly 40 pages of appendices and a five page index.

One of the valuable contributions of a book like this is setting the scene - introducing a novice to the shared understandings, the workflows, and the interactions of a project that go beyond the specific job an editor or indexer might do. If nothing else, this book shows you the questions you need to ask about indexing your specific project.

Jean Weber's trouble-shooting advice is also good. When I wrote online help about indexing for my team I was told: 'Glenda, make it shorter, you've written a book!' I said: 'But it's important information — I have to tell people why we do things.' I was then advised that if I couldn't take it out, I should separate it into a linked topic, so that people who wanted to know why would find it, but others wouldn't be burdened by too much information. This is pretty much the advice Jean gives in her section 'There's too much detail' (found in the index at 'level of detail', but not where I first looked, at 'detail').

Indexing

Jean Weber mentions two indexing books — Indexing books, by Nancy Mulvany (unfortunately written Mulvaney) and The Art of Indexing, by Larry Bonura. I gather that Larry Bonura is a technical writer, and I have added 'read The Art of Indexing' to my To Do list. She also lists the web indexing program HTML Indexer under 'Other add-ons for Windows', but doesn't discuss it.

The index to the book is thorough and neatly structured, although I found the use of plurals a bit inconsistent ('help plan', but 'help types'). There is a reference 'index entries. See keywords' but I would have also liked a reference from 'keywords' (pages 60 and 63) to 'index to online help' (pages 60, 63, and five others). These are minor complaints, however.

Conclusion

I am familiar with Jean's writing through her website, and have admired the index on her Australian travel website (http://www.avalook.com.au). I would recommend this book to anyone working, or planning to work, as an editor or indexer of online help. In fact, since a downloaded copy costs only $15, I recommend it to anyone who wants to expand their knowledge of the variety of experiences within their profession.

Glenda Browne is an indexer and librarian. She is the author, with Jonathan Jermy, of Website Indexing: Enhancing Access to Information within Websites, published by Austlib Press in 2000 (http://www.auslib.com.au). Glenda has indexed online help for NRMA Information Services for over two years. During this time she has also been involved in the development of the Online Help Style Guide, and has written online help topics about indexing.
periodical indexing, bibliographic work and electronic indexing.

Most respondents were freelance (67%). Only 15% were employees. Others nominated combinations of employee, freelance, volunteer, database manager and researcher.

Average hourly rates were just under $40 ($39.86), with a high of $50 and a low of $30. Costs for some specific services were higher (project management at $50.00) while others were lower (proofreading $27.50 and editing $34). (All reported dollar amounts have been averaged for those responding to this question (22 of 33 respondents).) It is interesting to note the difference between the editors' responses to a similar question. While the rates indexers report that they charge are lower by around $10 per hour, the variation is much narrower. (The range editors report varies from $15 an hour to $30.) And while the editor respondents charge virtually the same average amount as indexers for indexing ($41), indexer respondents charge an average of $16 less per hour than editors when they undertake editing work. Given the significant overlap of services offered by editors and indexers, perhaps there is some scope for the professional societies to discuss together rates for editors who undertake indexing and vice versa.

Other rates were mentioned for consulting ($65), lecturing ($92.50), research ($30), library consultancy for a project fee or by barter, and web indexing was described by one respondent as being at the top of the price range.

Maintaining and extending networks and increasing skills were seen as the greatest challenges (70% and 55%, respectively). Increasing income and finding interesting work were rated in the top three by 92% of respondents. One respondent's work was voluntary, because of the difficulties in establishing oneself as an indexer, others expressed a desire to expand into other fields such as writing and editing, the desire not to be replaced by a computer, and the need for passing on skills and fitting indexing in with other work.

By far the most commonly listed future development on people's minds was increased professional development programs through professional societies. This attracted the greatest number of responses and the greatest number of responses rated 1 (13). It was followed by increased education and training provision in educational institutions and closer coordination with relevant professional societies. One comment was that there are enough courses but they need to be more widely available (meaning on-line). (It is interesting to note that editors, too, overwhelmingly nominated professional development programs through professional societies as their highest priority.)

A wide range of subject areas was indicated, including all those listed on the questionnaire and others written in. The humanities received the largest number of checks (20), followed by environment (13), health (12), science (11) and politics (10). Some commented that indexers can be generalists, and that any and all subjects were welcome. Biography was mentioned by 3 respondents and there were single listings of annual reports, architecture, public administration, the arts, current affairs, history, medicine and maritime affairs, not to mention the very broad 'anything I can get'.

Other comments included:

- the difficulty in obtaining paid work in history and genealogy;
- the need for AusSI to do more to support new indexers, perhaps a mentoring scheme or certification as step towards registration;
- indexers and editors should join forces as advocates
- APA and ASA and Media and Arts Alliance should be involved in indexing issues;
- the need for new indexers
- difficulties in deciphering the conference workshop program.

One respondent took the trouble to attach a separate sheet of comments to the survey form. These comments are summarised below.

**Education:** I believe that indexers need a good general knowledge, a little bit of education specifically about indexing, and a lot of ongoing education about specific aspects of indexing ... the courses offered in NSW and Victoria are fine, and adequate to cover the needs of beginning indexers. Unfortunately they are not offered often enough, and are not often available in other states. Online education seems to be a solution to a very small potential student base spread over a large area ...

**Accreditation:** I am not in favour of increasing the steps or hurdles to becoming an indexer. We already know that editors pay little attention to registration when selecting an indexer ... communication with editors (as at the conference) about what we currently do is of far greater importance than setting up another level of testing ...

I have always liked the fact that indexing is relatively ... accessible ... for those who already have skills and experience in other fields ... Sometimes it seems that we want things like accreditation because they make us look professional, rather than for the benefits they bring.

**By far the most commonly listed future development on people's minds was increased professional development programs through professional societies.**

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey, whether at the conference, by mail or email. I thank Jean Norman, who helped analyse the indexers' section and the committee members who trialled the draft survey. I am keenly aware of the shortcomings of this survey, and not merely the formatting. Just the same, it's a start. If there is interest in running an improved survey again, perhaps in two years, I'd be happy to help or to hand on the lessons and data from this one. If anyone would like specific information not covered here, feel free to contact me on emend@cyberone.com.au.
**Offpress**

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (Queensland) August 2001

On page 9, a guideline for freelancers says that you should calculate your hourly rate based on the fact that you do 144 days’ paid work per year. The rest includes weekends, illness, time to run the business, and so on.

On page 11, Ron Jette recommends ‘give your work away’ when you are too busy, rather than trying to take on everything you are offered and being totally stressed. I agreed with much of his comment until he suggested passing on a job worth $1000 and taking a cut of $200 for finding the job.

I once read an excellent discussion on subcontracting on Index-L, in which the respondent explained that she either passes on total responsibility for a job (and takes no money) or takes a cut but also takes on the role of editor of the job. If you return a job with your name on it you want it to be of your typical quality. This editing process can easily take 20% of the total cost of the job and is money truly earned.

Indexers are very generous at sharing work they are unable to do. One said to me that he looks on it as a service to a client — if he can’t do the job, he can at least help them find someone else to do it.

**Society of Editors (Victoria) Newsletter vol. 31, no. 1, August 2001**

On pages 4–5 Janet Mackenzie discusses the direction the societies of editors should take following the release of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (launched at the Indexers and Editors Conference in Canberra this year).

She sees the next three steps as being accreditation, the need for a national body of editors, and publicity. The first and third of these are also priorities for indexers — fortunately we have always been a national body (for many years based in Melbourne, now in Sydney, and soon to move to Canberra, but always serving all indexers from Australia and New Zealand). One of her ideas for publicity is to have a prize for the worst-edited publication of the year.

**Editing style guides**

Go to http://www.allen-unwin.com.au/Academic/Styleguide.pdf to see the Allen & Unwin style guide. It has two pages on indexing, with a note that if an author decides to do their own index they will get a fuller guide. (It’s funny how you find things – I retrieved this because my conference paper in the proceedings of the Marysville conference is used as an example in the referencing section!)

**NFAIS Newsletter Vol. 43, no. 6, June 2001**

‘The future of secondary information’

Ev Brenner’s article includes discussion of eScience, just released by CAS/STN, which shows the importance of linking many sorts of information. This resource permits users to access a variety of science-related Web sites by clicking on related information buttons in STN databases. Perhaps portals are the way secondary information services should go in adding value to their basic offerings. Well-indexed scientific secondary sources cannot support themselves. ‘They are just a part of what researchers need.’

Brenner also discusses a paper by Lou Rosenfeld (co-author of Information Architecture for the World Wide Web) at a Search Engine conference. Lou said that we have to think of finding information, not searching for information, and that this will involve ‘browsing systems, filtering systems, user profiling, auto classification, auto categorisation, controlled vocabularies, and more. We have to use all the tools and design programs on a personalised basis also known as “contextualising” to address a user’s niche. It’s difficult to meet user’s expectations, but by asking users, observing their behaviour, and understanding their role, we will be able to build systems that approximate their needs.’

**Montague Institute**

There is heaps of good stuff on the Montague Institute site at http://www.montague.com, although sometimes you are given only a tempting abstract with a note that the full text is available to society members only. Their page headed ‘Where to find taxonomy information’ (http://www.montague.com/review/taxonomyINFO.html) links firstly to the American Society of Indexers’ site, and also to ‘Why is metadata a hot topic?’ (http://www.montague.com/review/meta.html).

‘Building a web vocabulary’

In ‘Building a web vocabulary (http://resources.cisco.com/app/ tree. Taf?asset_id=49971), Talila Baron discusses the creation of web vocabularies (thesauruses). Interestingly, the IT giant Cisco has a commitment to metadata, planning to create a single comprehensive metadata framework, requiring the recategorisation of more than 500,000 files. They say ‘The future success of Cisco depends on our consistency in defining and offering our products, services, and technologies to our customers, partners, and employees through the Internet. It is crucial to understand what’s needed in terms of content from the user’s point of view.’

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Glenda Browne

Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter
Book News from the Society of Indexers (UK)

Last but Not Least – A Guide for Editors Commissioning Journal Indexers
This new booklet is a sister publication to Last but Not Least – A Guide for Editors Commissioning Indexes, and, as its title suggests, is aimed at journal publishers. It covers all aspects, from finding and commissioning an indexer through to receiving the index and handling the proofs. There are sections on various types of journals, highlighting the problems peculiar to author and subject indexes, weekly journals and cumulative indexes. This 18-page booklet is an ideal desk reference for journal editors. Copies can be obtained, free of charge, from the office of the Society of Indexers.

Booth, P. Indexing: the manual of good practice

This newly published comprehensive British manual of indexing indicates, where possible, best practice in conformity with the latest standard (ISO 999). Its coverage includes the need for an index, what makes a good index, subject specialisms, non-book materials, managing the work and technology. Ideal for the beginner or someone thinking of taking up the craft. Experienced indexers will want to have it at hand.

Bell, Hazel. Indexers and Indexes in Fact and Fiction
October 2001. 160 pages, 10 b/w illustrations, 216x138mm, paperback with flaps ISBN 0 7123 4729 1 £16.00

The index, taken for granted, perhaps considered boring, or not considered at all, is an essential part of a book. Indexers and Indexes looks at the history, uses and implications of the index, and offers an anthology of amusing index extracts. Compiled by a professional indexer, it examines the history and development of the index, and highlights the debate and comment that the index has invited over the years. The author examines indexes from earlier centuries: some quaint; some humorous; some plain awful; and some which are astonishing in the vehemence of the views they present. Bell also examines the depiction of indexers in fiction. The picture she finds is not encouraging to professional indexers, who are variously portrayed as diffident, domestic drudges, incompetent and fallen pedants. A wonderful book for editors, indexers and bibliophiles.

To place an order please send a cheque or credit card details to: Catherine Britton, British Library Publishing Office, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB tel 0207 412 7535 fax 0207 412 7768, email catherine.britton@bl.uk. Post and packing is free in the UK, overseas charged £4.00 for Australia.

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October/November 2001
From 2001 the AusSI Web Indexing Prize will be replaced by an AusSI Web Index Award which can be awarded to any site at any time. The criteria for the award will be that the site makes a useful contribution to the retrieval of information from the site. Sites that qualify will be entitled to display the icon shown above. This will be linked to a page on the AusSI site giving the details of the award and listing awarded sites.

The endorsement will be valid for two years, and after that time the Web Manager can resubmit their site to have the endorsement renewed.

A committee will evaluate the sites to determine whether the index makes a useful contribution to retrieval of information from the site. The committee will prepare a brief report for the site indexer. If a site fails to obtain endorsement, the site indexer will be notified of the reasons and is entitled to re-submit their site when these have been addressed.