

Newsletter

Indexers' Medal

Report of the Panel of Judges

This year there were thirty-five entries — thirty-four books and one index to a periodical run covering seventy-six years — as against last year's fourteen entries. Several publishers sent more than one title, in one case six titles. Two entries were the work of New Zealand indexers.

While there were many good indexes among the entries, as in earlier years, there were few works which offered the challenges which would allow the indexer to demonstrate 'outstanding professional achievement'. The problem is in part due to the fact that Australia and New Zealand are not seen as significant publishing centres for the English-speaking world; so works which would offer these challenges are not often published in these countries.

This year the judges decided that unfortunately there was no entry which could be granted the Medal. However we wish to draw attention to particular strengths of three entries.

Making the Australian Defence Force

by David Horner.

(The Australian Centenary History of Defence, volume IV) Oxford University Press, 2001.

Indexed by Geraldine Suter

It is apparent that this book was carefully planned and executed with regard to the progress of the 'story' and the use of illustrative material — maps, figures, tables and illustrations — and list of abbreviations, notes and bibliography. This care is also evident in the index with selection of terms and inclusion of all illustrations. The

indexer has created a logical arrangement of entries for the units of the Australian Army, the RAAF and the RAN, with most acronyms identified in the table of abbreviations; but the listing of units includes some unusual abbreviations which may leave the general reader guessing, e.g. avn for aviation, rct for recruit, spt for support. Since there is one blank page over it would probably have been possible to give these in full. We assume that the decision not to do so was made by the editor. However this is a small blemish on an otherwise fine piece of work. This index is commended.

Plants in Action:

Adaptation in Nature,

Performance in Cultivation

Editors, Brian J Atwell, Paul E Kriedemann, Colin G N Turnbull. Macmillan Education, 1999.

Indexed by Michael Ramsden

This index is a fine example of textbook indexing with good judgment in the headings and subheadings and cross references. Apparently the number of pages for the index was limited.

Continued on page 27

What's inside

- 25 Medal
- 26 Noticeboard
- 28 AGM reports
- 30 Dates for your diary
- 31 The future of the knowledge society
- 35 From the literature

Notice

New Members

We warmly welcome three new members to AusSI: Ms Elizabeth Vella of Blackburn, Vic.; Ms Malory Weston from Moonesville Smith of Creswick, Vic., and Ms Helen Skewes of Neutral Bay, NSW.

Professional Development Weekend: 'A view from the Backbench'

The ACT Region Branch will hold a residential Professional Development weekend on Saturday and Sunday, 25-26 May 2002 at Ranelagh House in the Southern Tablelands town of Robertson. Longstanding members of AusSI may remember that Ranelagh House was the venue for the Branch's 1996 weekend workshop on Indexing in the Electronic Age. This time, the weekend will be inward- rather than forward-looking, with members sharing experiences and discussing issues of interest.

The focus of the weekend will be participatory: there will be few if any guest speakers. We have identified a number of themes for exploration and hope to further our understanding of our practices and profession through informal and open discussion. Themes to be addressed will include:

- ☐ Education and educational opportunities (including updates on activities from members of the newly-formed Education Committee)
- ☐ Members' Moments (which will encourage participants to share experiences and have their say about issues dear to their hearts)
- ☐ Business issues (covering such controversies as clearinghouses, cooperatives and other entrepreneurial enterprises); and
- ☐ The future of AusSI (what would members like from their Society?)

Time will be available for 'nuts and bolts' sessions, a Round Robin of current activities, and plenty of discussion, discussion, discussion! Coupled with great food, beautiful scenery and lovely grounds, the weekend should provide a good blend of professional input and plain fun.

The weekend will run from 10.30 Saturday to after lunch (about 1 pm) Sunday. Cost is \$180.00 per person and includes accommodation on Saturday night and all meals. Transport to the venue will be provided for those arriving by train. We hope some of our members from interstate can join us to examine our roles and goals. Numbers will be limited, so please contact Lynn Farkas by email at

lfarkas@pcug.org.au for a registration brochure if you would like to secure your place at this event. (Note: ACT Region Branch members will be receiving registration brochures through the mail shortly.)

NSW Continuing Professional Development

I would like to let everyone know that our Continuing Professional Development 2002 schedule of seminars and workshops is now available on our Web site <http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/>.

We have an exciting program with more to come.

May 3, 10 & 17

Introduction to Book Indexing

May 24

Computer-aided Indexing

May 30

Analysing, abstracting and indexing documents for databases

June 14

Indexing Web pages and documents

June 21

Synonyms and taxonomies: thesaurus design for information architects

Sept 6 & 13

Indexing and storing images and multimedia

Maureen Henninger

*Coordinator of Continuing Professional Development
The University of New South Wales
M.Henninger@unsw.edu.au*

Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills

Cunningham Library staff at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), will present two workshops at ACER, Melbourne in May 2002 and again in August 2002.

Workshop 1: Information literacy and searching

On the completion of this workshop participants will understand:

- ☐ how information is stored and organised
- ☐ where information is available within the subject discipline of education, human resource management and psychology

board

- ❑ how to develop a search strategy for online data bases and the web environment
 - ❑ how to select and retrieve information which deals with downloading, printing and emailing
- Dates: Friday 3 May; Wednesday 21 August.
Cost \$132 per session (inc GST).

Workshop 2: Writing, abstracting and referencing for journal articles and reports

On the completion of this workshop participants will understand:

- ❑ how to write abstracts for journal articles
- ❑ how to cite references — APA, Harvard, Vancouver styles
- ❑ evaluating information
- ❑ how to manage references using bibliographic database management programs e.g. PROCITE, ENDNOTE

Dates: Friday 10 May; Wednesday 22 August
Cost \$132 per session (inc GST)

Attendance at Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 can be made available for \$250 (inc GST).

Course leaders : Margaret Findlay and Max McMaster.

Venue: ACER 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell Vic 3124 Australia.

Please contact to reserve your place: Professional Development Unit, ACER, Private Bag 55, Camberwell Vic 3124. Tel: (03) 9835 7403; Fax (03) 9835 7499; email: workshops@acer.edu.au.

Margaret Findlay
Manager, Cunningham Library
Australian Council for Educational Research
findlay@acer.edu.au
<http://www.acer.edu.au/library>

AODC 2002

AODC 2002, the 5th Annual Australasian Online Documentation Conference, is for anyone involved in corporate documentation, online help, Web authoring and technical writing. AODC 2002 will be held at the Sheraton Towers Southgate hotel in Melbourne, 17-19 April. Further information is available at <http://www.aodc.com.au>.

Penny Bradley
Conference Administrator

Indexers' Medal *Continued from page 25*

The colour plates are not indexed and other illustrations including figures and tables are only selectively indexed leaving much information inaccessible. This is unfortunate because it reduces the value of a well-compiled textbook. Nevertheless the indexer is commended for fine work within the limitations imposed.

Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action,

by Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Indexed by Trevor Matthews

This book explores the development of the understanding of the environment in Australia and the expression of this understanding in politics, the arts and sciences and in public life. It studies the work of writers, conservationists, trade union leaders, politicians and artists from the Heidelberg School to Michael Leunig, from Banjo Paterson to Judith Wright and from Bob Brown to the Whitlam and Fraser governments. The relationships are complex and the indexer shows an understanding of this complexity, giving an accurate 'indication' of what the book contains as well as providing a guide to the attitudes adopted and the atmosphere created by the authors. The index scores highly on all the criteria except size, having some 700 entries including about 25 per cent names. While this limitation is set by the text and its accompanying illustrations it reduced the scope of the challenge which the book presented to the indexer. However within this limitation he has done excellent work and so he is highly commended.

Ann Bentley (Librarian)
Pam Jonas (Editor)
Max McMaster (Indexer)
John Simkin (Chairman of Judges)

From the Editor

In our third issue for 2002 we publish the report of the panel of judges for the Indexers' Medal 2001, conclude Richard Walsh's keynote address to the 'Partnerships in Knowledge' conference held in Canberra, and we publish the composition of the new National and Branch committees. There are also plenty of activities listed in our Noticeboard to interest members.

Frances Paterson

Annual General Meetings

National and ACT Region Branch

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of Indexers was held jointly with the ACT Region Branch's AGM on 26 February 2002 at the Great Wall Restaurant in Canberra.

Alan Walker, outgoing President of AusSI, outlined the recent achievements of the Society and highlighted some of the ongoing activities and issues. Members then gave a vote of thanks to the current National Committee and Executive for their work over the past few years.

The main business of both meetings was the election of Society officers. The composition of the new Executives, Committees and officers follows:

AusSI National Committee and Officers 2002

President: Lynn Farkas
Vice-President: Alan Walker
Secretary: Shirley Campbell
Treasurer: Penelope Whitten
Ex-officio: Presidents of NSW, Vic and ACT Branches
Committee: Edyth Binkowski, Prue Deacon, Sandra Henderson, Robert Hyslop, Pat Stone, Susan White
Registration Chairperson: Michael Harrington
Membership Secretary: Michael Wyatt
Web Manager: Emeline Haight
Newsletter Editor: Frances Paterson
Publicity Officer: Jon Jerney

AusSI (ACT Region Branch) Committee 2002

President: Geraldine Triffitt
Secretary: Edyth Binkowski
Treasurer: Pat Stone
Past President: Lynn Farkas
Committee: Shirley Campbell, Prue Deacon, Sandra Henderson, Robert Hyslop, Susan White, Penelope Whitten.

The Society welcomes all new and ongoing officers to their positions.

The AGMs were followed by short presentations from three ACT Branch members about their experiences as students working through the distance education back-of-book courses offered by American and British agencies. Sally Goodenough outlined the course offered by the US Department of Agriculture and gave her views on its level and effectiveness, and Shirley

Campbell and Geraldine Triffitt did the same for the British course provided by Ann Hall. Their frank, practical and often entertaining comments about aspects of the courses made for an interesting and informative evening.

NSW Branch

The Annual General Meeting of the NSW Branch of the Australian Society of Indexers was held at the New Hong Kong Restaurant, 44 Macleay Street, Potts Point, NSW 2011 at 6:30 pm on Wednesday 13 March 2002.

President's Report

Alan Walker reported that the major activities for NSW members during 2001 were the Canberra conference in April and the Christmas lunch in December. A number of training courses were held, but the Sky Index workshop was cancelled because of insufficient enrolments.

Election of Committees for NSW Branch 2002 and for International Conference 2003

The following were elected as officers of the NSW Branch:

President: Caroline Colton
Vice-President: Lorraine Doyle
Hon. Secretary: Alan Walker
Hon. Treasurer: Glenda Browne
Committee members: Madeleine Davis, Pamela Johnstone, Trevor Matthews, Frances Paterson, Helen Skewes, Deirdre Ward, Tricia Waters, Michael Wyatt.

A committee to run the International Conference in 2003 will be elected from the above, at the first committee meeting, to be held at 10 Rockwall Crescent, Potts Point on Wednesday 3 April at 6 pm.

Report on AusSI Medal 2001

Alan Walker read from the report of the judges for the Medal, and presented a certificate to Trevor Matthews, whose index was highly commended. Trevor was congratulated on his achievement.

Victorian Branch

Annual Report 2001

Our calendar year commenced with the Annual General Meeting and Dinner, held once again in the gracious environment we have here tonight.

Following upon the official business of the night, we were delighted to hear the announcement, by Panel Chairman, John Simkin, that Max McMaster had won the Indexers' Medal for 2000 with his outstanding index to *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, published by OUP.

Madeleine Davis received a Highly Commended Certificate for her fine example of biography indexing to *Frank Lowy: Pushing the Limits* published by Harper Collins.

Guest speaker Michael Webster gave a delightful insight into the world of publishing and his own experience within this industry.

We were all saddened to lose our dear friend and colleague, Josephine McGovern, who passed away on 2 April this year. In 1976 Josephine became a Foundation Member of AusSI. Over the years she served as President, Vice-President, Chairman of the Panel of Assessors and well as being a committee member up till her death. It is a tribute to her longstanding membership of the Melbourne University Graduate Union, her cheerful willingness to help wherever needed, and the warmth and graciousness of her personality that we are meeting here again tonight. I would like you all to drink a toast to a wonderful lady.

Partnerships in Knowledge : a Joint Conference organised by the ACT Region of AusSI and the Society of Editors which was held in Canberra in April was the first joint conference of Australia's editors and indexers and the first focusing on the links between all sectors of the knowledge community. Victorian members who attended all agreed that it was great to be in touch with so many editors on an equal professional footing.

If it's not in The Age it hasn't happened! On Saturday 30 June, Mr Frank Prain, Library Manager of *The Age* Newspaper demonstrated to a number of Vic Branch members the resources of both the full-text and picture collection databases which comprise the in-house services for users within the Fairfax stable of publications.

The Indexing Software Workshop, held at ACER on Saturday 18 August attracted many participants who were treated to an introductory overview of this topic by John Simkin, and then each of the demonstrators

gave a 10-minute 'show and tell' of their respective programs before everyone divided into small groups for intensive sessions of play and practice with the various software packages on display. Our grateful thanks to Frances Lennie (CINDEX), Michael Wyatt (SKY Index), Max McMaster (MACREX) and Jennifer Csorba and Micky Ashton (Inmagic/DB Textworks) for making this seminar such a valuable experience.

Which one's the Picasso? On Thursday 25 October we were treated to a fascinating tour of the Exhibition and Collection Management Departments of the National Gallery of Victoria at their temporary location in North Melbourne. How fortunate we were to be able to view the 'hidden treasures' of the gallery and what a wonderful visit this was to an unknown part of the NGV. We look forward to learning more about the cataloguing and recording of this collection in April when David Belzycki, Manager, Cataloguing will be our guest speaker.

A pre-Christmas get-together was held at the President's home on 4 December and provided a most enjoyable end to the year's activities.

Max McMaster, ably assisted by Margaret Findlay, ran a number of training sessions for Back-of-the-Book, Database Collection and Journal indexing, both at ACER in Melbourne and interstate locations.

Throughout the year numerous responses were submitted by the Vic Branch to issues raised at National Committee level, including the vexed question of Registration standards and procedures. Max McMaster and John Simkin have been seconded on to the Educational Training and Standards Sub-Committee.

John Simkin represented AusSI at *Indexing at the Cutting Edge*, held in July at Sheffield in the UK. He has once more scoured the shelves of the State Library to provide a short list of recommended titles containing outstanding indexes and Margaret Findlay did a mail merge to the publishers involved inviting their submissions, which has resulted in a gratifying response. The Indexing Medal Award Sub-Committee of John Simkin, Max McMaster, Anne Bentley and Pam Jonas, was constituted again by the Vic Branch and we thank the members for their commitment and

wisdom in the reviewing and awarding process.

On behalf of the Victorian Branch, I thank the members of the Committee for their support. Ann Philpott (Treasurer) has negotiated the intricacies of the GST with constant good humour and agility. Jennifer Csorba joined our ranks this year and was immediately cast into the role of Secretary which she has accomplished with admirable aplomb. Josephine had been our Postmistress for many years and I am grateful to John Simkin for agreeing to take on this role, through the rigours of fire and relocation. Elizabeth Wood-Ellem has quietly done all that was asked of her, without complaint.

To Max McMaster and Margaret Findlay, I offer my especial thanks for their constant support and advice.

In closing, we must acknowledge the assistance of the Australian Council for Educational Research which has kindly provided its meetings rooms for Committee meetings, workshops, training sessions and general meetings.

*Jenny Restarick
President, 2001*

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Dates & Diary

April 17-19

AODC 2002, details at <http://www.aodc.com.au>

May 3 Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills. Details in Noticeboard.

May 3, 10 & 17

Introduction to Book Indexing at UNSW. Details <http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/>

May 7 Society of Editors (NSW) monthly meeting, Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, 6.30 for 7.00 pm. RSVP to 02 9294 4999 (voicemail) or email mmripear@ozemail.com.au

May 10 Professional Development in Information Literacy and Searching Skills. Details in Noticeboard.

May 20-26

Library & Information Week

ALIA 2002 Conference. Details at <http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/alia2002>

May 24 Computer-aided Indexing at UNSW. Details <http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/>

May 24-26

Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada/Société canadienne pour l'analyse de documents Annual Conference and AGM 2002 <http://www.indexingsociety.ca>

May 25-26

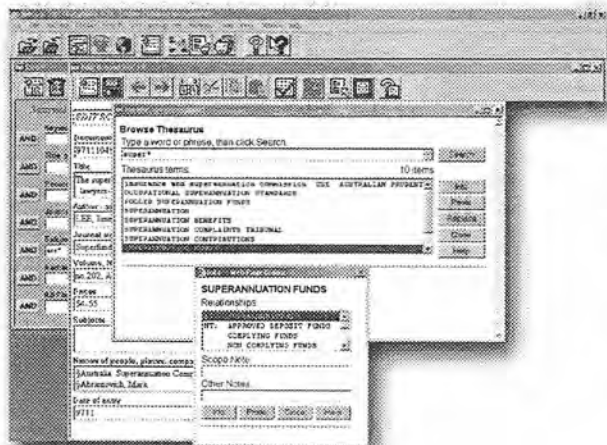
ACT Region Branch Professional Development Weekend at Ranelagh House, Robertson, NSW

May 30 Analysing, abstracting and indexing documents for databases at UNSW. Details <http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/>

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The future of the knowledge society

Keynote address to the
'Partnerships in Knowledge' Conference
held Canberra 20-23 April 2001

Richard Walsh

'The future of the knowledge society' has been reproduced over the January/February and March issues and concludes here.

Halfway between E-books and printed books, which are now sometimes referred to as P-books, there is the D-book, the Digital Book. Dbooks.com for example is a company located at North Sydney which uses Fuji Xerox digital printers to produce very low print-runs from existing pdf files. D-books are printed both sides of the paper and then perfect-bound as a paperback with a full-colour cover. Printing off just one single copy of a 200-page book may cost you as little as \$15; if the print-run is a modest 200, the price comes down to \$7-odd per copy. At the moment this technique is being used for micro-reprints or to provide publishers with a small number of advance copies of a new book before it comes off the big printing presses. However, the future application of this technology is obvious.

In America, machines capable of printing and binding digitised texts are already being deployed by Ingram, the leading American book wholesaler, and are now being placed in the Barnes and Noble distribution centres and in publishers' warehouses. Jason Epstein in his essay foresees a future in which less expensive versions of these machines 'can be housed in public libraries, schools and universities, and perhaps even in post offices and other convenient places ... where readers can download digitised texts in electronic form or as printed copies, bypassing retail bookstores ... Though books manufactured in very small quantities or one at a time by these machines will cost more to produce than factory-made books, their ultimate cost to readers will be less, since publishers' distribution costs

and retail markups will not figure in their price ... the convenience of these machines in thousands of locations with access to potentially limitless virtual inventories, catalogued, annotated, and searchable electronically, will profoundly affect current book marketing practice, to say nothing of the effect on readers and writers.'

I do not quite understand why Epstein foresees these developments as 'bypassing retail bookstores'; I suspect, rather, that such new technology will simply transform the traditional bookstore. The capital cost of machines that can spit out instant D-books is certainly declining dramatically. A conference in Melbourne last month on Book Production in Transition was informed that the cost of a high-powered laser colour printer with built-in collating and binding functions capable of producing an entire paperback book in one smooth process has recently dropped from \$750,000 to \$350,000 per machine.

Nonetheless, this is a substantial outlay and sufficiently high to prevent them sprouting like mushrooms on every street corner. What we are more likely to see is a new type of highly attractive retail outlet where you can linger and eat, where you can listen to records or browse through old-fashioned printed books or, if you wish, where you can order from the vast inventory of available digitised texts a D-book or two, which may be produced for you while you wait. This is the bookshop of the future, rather than the bookshop bypassed.

Publishers are well advanced in using the net to promote their books. One of the most dynamic ways of encouraging book sales is by posting

excerpts online; Allen & Unwin, for example, is a local publisher doing this very successfully. Steve Ditlea, in his article last year, to which I've already referred, draws attention to the efforts of veteran science-fiction publisher Jim Baen who in September 1999 initiated what he calls eWebScriptions; for \$10 a month, visitors to Baen's website may download quarter-of-a-book-sized instalments of four titles about to appear in print. Even after receiving the full text in HTML, 'more of our subscribers buy the finished book than don't buy it', claims Baen. By March last year one of his earliest eWebScriptions titles, *Ashes of Victory* by David Weber, had turned up on hardcover best-seller lists in America, partly propelled by Baen's online activities.

*A D-book or two
may be produced
for you while you
wait. This is the
bookshop of the
future, rather than
the bookshop
bypassed.*

Once upon a time, as you may remember, all books were published first in hardback and the most popular of them were offered as paperbacks. Today most books appear at first in paperback and only those offering special commercial prospects appear in hardback. But we are probably moving towards a tomorrow when books will mainly appear initially on-line and then the best of them will later appear in print, and maybe — and this would be the ultimate accolade — sometimes even in hardback.

Some books may be trialled on-line; others may be excerpted. There may also, for example, be subscription sites where for a few dollars a week you can get a fresh new poem each morning to inspire you through your day. Short poems are ideally suited to the computer screen. But probably for a long time yet — maybe even forever — the most prestigious way in which an author may dream of being published will be as a printed item. It may even be that the classics of our times will be printed lovingly, using hot-metal type on handmade paper with elaborate end-papers and so on. Once upon a time people only hired videotapes but in the future a library of great films on DVD and favourite books, handsomely printed, may well be the ultimate distinction of a cultured human being.

On the other hand, clearly some categories of books are unlikely ever to be seen in print again. Reference books, for example, are exquisitely well suited to the net. In the past readers were asked to outlay large sums of money for a set of printed encyclopedias, but the text was already out of date on Day One and 90 per cent of the contents would never be read. On-line publishing allows reference books to remain up-to-date at all times and the cost to the reader can be better calibrated to usage. MacquarieNet is a local pioneering attempt to achieve this. For a monthly fee subscribers can tap into the whole of the Macquarie Library of books plus other syndicated reference material.

A report in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* I.T. section last month on Random House's new digital imprint, AtRandom.comBooks, noted: 'Many observers think E-books work best as an information medium, not a storytelling one, and statistics indicate that during the next few years,

education/reference books will do better in electronic form than fiction and other mainstream genres. In a study released last week by Jupiter Media Metrics, the research firm projected that 6 per cent of college book sales would be in electronic form by 2005, compared with just 1.5 per cent of consumer titles.'

Such books have the potential to be published initially in a special kind of basic English that can be instantaneously machine-translated into any one of a number of global languages

Academics, in particular, see the net as a magnificent opportunity to overcome, in one mighty leap, all those tiresome obstacles that stand between them and publication. No more peer reviews, with their murky machiavellian politics; no more irritating economic realities. The availability to anyone interested of every monograph ever written, of every PhD thesis (however arcane), of every intellectual contribution ever concocted, is a triumph of New Media intellectual democracy. To attempt to edit any of this would be what realtors call over-capitalisation.

On-line publishing really comes into its own with specialised titles, whether scholarly or of other kinds. Steve Ditlea cites an example of an on-line title called *A Potter's Geology*, which is far too specialised a book for any publisher in a single country. The web allows those interested in such a title, however thinly dispersed over the planet, to access its text.

What Ditlea doesn't mention is an enticing future prospect. Such books have the potential to be published initially in a special kind of basic English that can be instantaneously machine-translated into any one of a number of global languages selected by the prospective reader. Thus a book like *A Potter's Geology* can be available online not merely to the couple of hundred people in each continent who are interested in its contents but in whichever principal language they prefer to read it. While machine translation is still in its infancy, it can in fact be very accurate if the author and editor work within the discipline of a limited and predictable vocabulary with a simplified, stripped-down syntax. Michael Singh, Professor of Language and Culture at RMIT, has contributed a fascinating chapter on these possibilities in a volume called *C-2-C* (standing for Creator to Consumer), the proceedings of the Melbourne conference on Australian Book Production in Transition organised by RMIT last month and published instantaneously by their Common Ground operation as a D-book.

Most E-books these days are conceived of as being very text-oriented. Anything too complicated on-line simply takes too long to download, leading to reader impatience. But we should never forget that there is another kind of non-print book entity. Here is the ever-eloquent New Media commentator, Ralph Lombreglia, wallowing in a little nostalgia in his contribution last December to the *Atlantic Unbound*:

In the early nineties, my wife and I were hired by a small development company ...

The result was *A Jack Kerouac ROMnibus*, published by Penguin Electronic in 1995 ... if a more ambitious 'multimedia illumination' of a full-length literary text has ever been attempted, I'm not aware of it. Hundreds and hundreds of phrases in Kerouac's text were linked to pop-up annotations in various media: photographs of people, places, memorabilia from the author's estate, and pages from his note-books; audio readings of various texts; clips from films; original interviews videotaped for the project. All these years later, it still looks great. Unfortunately, you can't see it, because it's no longer available. When we started the pro-

ject, no one had ever heard the word Netscape. When we finished it, the word Netscape was everywhere, and before long the World Wide Web helped kill the CD-ROM publishing business and in the process set multimedia production back at least five years.

I should add here that I myself was involved peripherally in a similar venture to this all those years ago — an elaborate version of Joseph Banks Journal, published by the State Library of NSW. I think they still have copies available in their bookshop if you were interested in seeing it.

Ralph Lombreglia concludes rather sadly:

Most readers never saw the electronic books of the 1990s. That's because serious, well-produced CD-ROMs were too far ahead of their time — too far ahead of the software, the hardware, the digital economy itself. The general public may well believe 'e-book' to be a brand-new, twenty-first-century idea ... [but] electronic-multimedia books could indeed become the future of reading, or part of it. Just like they used to be.

Despite every attempt to provide high-speed access to the internet, the information highway may never be as fast as we wish it to be. Just as when we build motorways in the real world they simply seem to encourage more traffic and so their immediate beneficial effect is dissipated, so it may be that, for all the cables that are frenetically being laid, we may never be able to keep up with digital demand and deliver the download speeds the online spruikers are predicting as just around the corner. For this reason it is not impossible that the CD-ROM, which delivers a succession of still and moving images so rapidly and effortlessly, may yet make a comeback and prove as durable as the printed book.

And so at last we come to a question which may conceivably be of more than passing interest to those of you gathered here on this bright Canberra morning: In all this maelstrom of change, you may well ask, what exactly does the future hold for today's industrious and highly experienced editors and indexers?

Well, there is good news and there is good news.

Firstly, I think all of us have to accept that the new technology offers a sophisticated and timely solution to the two greatest impediments to

modern book reading. The two greatest complaints laid against the book by dedicated readers is that books are now too expensive and too unavailable, meaning by the latter that it is simply too difficult to locate a bookstore that stocks any specific title we are after at that particular moment.

These problems are nobody's fault, as we know, but a direct outcome of over-publication. We are spoilt for choice, which is wonderful given that our interests and tastes are so wide-ranging, but this torrent of titles is its own undoing. Print-runs are shorter, therefore cover prices soar; there are so many new and recently old titles that no bookshop, however large, could ever be expected to stock them all or anticipate from which direction the next surge of demand will arise.

Amazon Books and its imitators have made an important early contribution to book availability but ultimately online technology, via either on-screen texts or advanced E-book reader machines or digital printing on demand, will deliver 100 per cent availability of most titles anywhere on the planet at any hour. Apart from being a giant step forward in convenience, consider for a moment the impact of this on world literacy and world enlightenment and rejoice.

The second point to make is that these changes will in time create cheaper books. Today in Australia one of the largest costs publishers have to meet is their writedown of stock; across the whole industry it undoubtedly costs more than \$100m. per year to write off stock that ultimately has to be sold at well below its manufactured cost. This, in accounting terms, represents the size of the risk publishers embrace each time they print copies of any book — across all the titles a large publisher produces in any year this cost alone may represent 10–15 per cent of the recommended retail price.

The new technology lowers the investment publishers have to make in printed stock per book and thus it lowers the interest they have to pay to their banks or shareholders; it lowers the risk they take and thus their writedown costs; it lowers their warehousing costs and their distribution costs. Because it may lower the cost of a bookseller's inventory it may even lower the discount that is appropriate to the retailer.

In time readers can expect not only to see the price of books come down,

in relation to other kinds of goods, but also to experience less agonising doubt in choosing which titles to buy. Today our friends recommend a book to us as a must-read; on the other hand, we may have read some reviews of this particular book which are equivocal — we hesitate in purchasing it because we fear disappointment. Reading an excerpt on the web can be much more reassuring than sneaking a quick squiz in a bookshop.

To be able to buy what we want, when we want, at a more manageable price and with greater certainty of reader satisfaction — this represents a giant step forward in anybody's language. Particularly in a world where newspaper reading is declining and where — in relation to one traditionally important sector of book readership — there is an ever-swelling population of retired people who are going to enjoy good health and good eyesight for many decades to come.

What exactly does the future hold for today's industrious and highly experienced editors and indexers?

Now, as publishing professionals, you are entitled to feel a little aggrieved that there are going to be plenty of literary and unliterary works flying around cyberspace that have never experienced the gentle and caring touch of a publishing editor. But it doesn't pay for you to get too excited about that. In our personal lives we long ago have had to get used to the fact that our friends — even our writer friends — sometimes send us letters, and these days e-mail, that surprise us with their carelessness and near illiteracy. All you can do is grit your teeth, shrug your shoulders and get on with your life.

I have mentioned previously a D-book called *C-2-C*, which was

produced last month, reproducing the papers presented at a Melbourne conference on Australian Book Production in Transition. This was published by Common Ground, a publishing endeavour associated with RMIT and specifically its Faculty of Art Design and Communication. Not a bad provenance, you might be forgiven for thinking; and indeed its contents are very stimulating indeed. But as a piece of professional publishing it's a joke. It's in very great need of good subbing and competent proof-reading; its index, no doubt produced by a computer, is almost useless.

The view of the future promoted by the text of *C-2-C* is superficially seductive for authors — it suggests that, through a reduction in printing and publishing costs, authors may now hope for larger royalties than they have ever previously dreamed of. Of course, the folk from Common Ground are talking about royalty rates — these people seem to be mildly innumerate in not understanding that a professional writer is ultimately more concerned with total income than royalty rates. After all, it's a triumph if authors get a 25 per cent royalty but somewhat of a pyrrhic victory if they only manage to sell 500 copies.

C-2-C's index, no doubt produced by a computer, is almost useless.

The world we are entering is going to be even more intensely competitive for authors than the world that preceded it. In the past it's been only a minor achievement to write a book; the real achievement has been getting it published. Now we have a situation where getting published is only a minor achievement but to gain wider recognition and a significant readership will certainly take more skill than the mere capacity to digitise text. To be properly edited and professionally indexed and marketed — these are

the kinds of cutting-edge advantages few professional writers will want to sacrifice.

In the last decade there has been a marked increase in the activities of literary agents in trade publishing — it is estimated that today 90 per cent of general books issued by major publishers come to them via agents. Clearly, from what I have said, I see the conventional roles of publishers and agents merging. Editors will work for these new entities as they have traditionally done — encouraging authors, assessing new clients, preparing material for publication. Some manuscripts may well at first be test-driven on the internet in an unedited form but, having evoked a positive response there, they may then need to be professionally edited and prepared for their next step up the literary chain, as a D-book or an off-set-printed P-book.

Ideas expressed in written words will continue to be the most significant way of analysing and arguing about the great social and political issues of the day. However, the border between writers and editors and polishers and checkers and researchers will over time blur. Material that is published and produced by the famous 'Jo Smith', in whatever medium, may well be the output of six or eight writers or editors, in the same way as daily gossip columns are produced — in the language of Renaissance art, such material may come from the studio of Jo Smith.

Once upon a time ideas expressed in written words were almost exclusively the province of the print media — of Father Bear, Mother Bear and Baby Bear. Give or take a bit of graffiti and some other minor exceptions, there was simply no other way of written words reaching out to people. But we now need a new way of describing even this notion because no longer is it true to say that ideas expressed in written words must of necessity appear as print on paper. The old tripartite separation of the print media — based on three distinctive manufactured products — is clearly no longer sustainable. But whatever new publishing configuration arises, there will always be a continuing vocation for those who can assist writers reach their fullest potential and their widest possible readership.

The new technology brings with it the promise of more reading, not less. Yes, more unedited manuscripts on

the web but also, when it matters, more material to be professionally edited and marketed and *published* than ever before.

To be properly edited and professionally indexed and marketed — these are the kinds of cutting-edge advantages few professional writers will want to sacrifice.

As always throughout human history, we cannot fight technological progress, we must instead use our best efforts to harness it to our greatest advantage. But never forget this. For the media the big story of the 20th century was the creation of film and broadcast media. But to enjoy radio, to enjoy movies, to enjoy TV you did not need to be able to read or write — literacy may at times help you enjoy those media but it is not strictly necessary. However, right at the very end of the 20th century, along came the internet. It is virtually impossible to use the internet without being able to read or write. Indeed, the popularity of the PC has meant that more people — yes, even men — know their way around a keyboard. The internet is literacy striking back.

As literate folk you should celebrate this remarkable, dramatic and recent change. Somewhere in all this rapid, dazzling and sometimes confusing evolution of mass literacy there is certain to be an exciting role for those who love language and value knowledge, and want to share that love with other readers.

From the literature

Glenda Browne

An Index to the *Occult Review* 1906–1928 London

Thank heavens for indexers, the Internet, and interlibrary loan. For years we had a book on our family bookshelf by Alice M Browne, my father's great-aunt. I never read it, because my father had implied that it was vanity-published and of little literary worth, and the title, *That Colony of God*, didn't suggest a gripping yarn. Now that I am planning to visit Leamington, where she lived (it is very near the SI conference site at Cheltenham) I have taken more of an interest, and found a love story worthy of Mills and Boon, along with a serious analysis of the newfound interest in spiritualism and séances. 'That colony of God' referred to the soul.

Having rediscovered great-great-aunt Alice, I hoped to find something about her book on the web. Nothing, until Jon retrieved an index to the *Occult Review*, with a reference to her book. Now I'm off to the local library, through which I hope to get a copy of the 1924 review. (Update: not held in Australia — will have to try further afield.)

PS: Although she called it 'Leamington' in all her writings, it is on tourist maps as 'Royal Leamington Spa' — yet another issue for indexers — to file it at 'L' or 'R'? (I also recently saw a list of places in a travel brochure in which the Philippines was filed at 'T' (for The). Would anyone look there?

The Concatenator The Newsletter of Western Indexing

I've been browsing some back issues of *The Concatenator*, published twice a year by Western Indexing (director, Lee Brentlinger). Each issue focuses on one area, and extensive bibliographies are provided. Topics include personal names (Autumn 1995), Roman alphabetisation (Autumn 1996)

and place names (Autumn 1997). For more information see the website at <http://www.westernindexing.com>

Among other things, Western Indexing provides a consultancy service to authors. One fee covers written materials and answers to questions. Could be hard work, but given that many authors compile their own indexes, the provision of a service to provide indexing expertise sounds like a good idea.

Sidelights no. 4, Winter 2001

Audrey Judkins wrote on 'Reference starting points: History' (pp. 1–3) and listed a number of important sources, including *Pears Cyclopaedia* (London: Penguin, published every year). She bought Wheatley's *What is an Index?* (Index Society, 1878) at Hay-on-Wye, the second-hand-book capital of Europe. Jon, Bill and Jenny will be scouring the shelves there while I go to the SI conference (and I believe another international indexer is planning a visit too). I asked Bill if 30 towns with one bookshop each would be as good as one town with 30 bookshops. He said 'No, because there's less walking if they're all in a row.'

SI has arranged discounts on insurance products (pp. 5–6). Even without the discount they sound much better than we get. For example, 110 pounds per year plus tax for Professional Indemnity Insurance. I have been quoted figures around A\$2000 per year for metadata work.

As of 1 January 2002, SI recommends minimum rates of £15 to £20 per hour, or £1.20 to £2.00 per page. They note that experienced indexers working on specialised texts will normally charge well above these rates, and that the fee negotiated will depend on complexity of the text, depth of indexing, page and type size, and deadline.

SI vice-presidents have recently prepared a strategy document setting

out aims for the society (report pp. 6–7). They feel that one important thing is to 'get across to the public at large what indexers actually do.' They suggest testing the credibility and comprehensibility of newer terms such as 'information architects' and 'knowledge management' to see whether they might be more informative. Indexers in Sydney have at times made similar suggestions, but as far as I am concerned I index, therefore the best way to describe myself is as an indexer. The other terms mentioned all have much broader implications than pure indexing so are much less useful. As soon as I explain what indexers do people have no trouble understanding the idea. They also suggest developing stronger links with publishers (a great idea) and investigating unconventional sources of work (another great idea). I occasionally get job offers from the public service and other groups who are not mainstream publishers, but are responsible for the occasional book. I thought they are an untapped market, although obviously some of them are making their way towards AusSI members. Creation of metadata for websites and intranets is another field that should be burgeoning, but I don't know who is doing the work (if anyone).

Local and special interest groups reported on their activities. The Three Choirs Group met at a member's house in Cheltenham; they recommend this as a nice sort of venue for small meetings.

Online Currents vol. 17, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2002

System Roundup notes that La Trobe University has received a grant to index *The Argus*, a Melbourne newspaper, from 1870 to 1879. The index will be available online through the National Library. (Earlier issues of *The Argus* have been indexed, and Geraldine Suter won an AusSI Medal for this work.)

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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 fourth Friday of each month for publication in the middle of the next month. We are delighted to receive contributions, both large and small, from members. Please contact us 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). Do not embed footnotes in Word files.

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