

SOCIETY OF INDEXERS IN AUSTRALIA

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*Absente auxilio perquirimus undique
frustra.*

*Sed nobis ingene indicis
auxilium est.*

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER TWO

FREE TO MEMBERS

AUGUST 1973

NEXT MEETING

On Monday, 13 August 1973, at 8 p.m. at 35 Rosedale Road, Glen Iris, Mrs. Patricia Alonso will continue the series of "My-experiences-in-indexing" talks so ably begun by Mrs. Dorothy Prescott at our last meeting in June, the full text of which is given as a supplement to this Newsletter. Mrs. Alonso will speak on a feasibility study for a commercial index to a reference text, conducted as a research project during her course for the Master of Science degree at the Columbia University School of Library Service, and on an index to a periodical run by slip method. Members are invited to bring a guest to this meeting.

NAME APPROVED

The Council of the Society of Indexers at their last meeting formally approved the name "The Society of Indexers in Australia".

This was reported by the Honorary Secretary (Miss P. M. Trew) in a letter dated 18 June 1973.

CONGRATULATIONS, JOHN RUSSELL

Russell L.D. Cope, librarian to the New South Wales Parliament, reviewing the Victorian Year Book 1973 (number 87), (Victorian Office, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1973), has this to say:

"...a word of praise for the extremely full index which also indexes items listed in the chronology."

John Russell, our indefatigable secretary-treasurer, was responsible for the compilation of this index.

Congratulations, John.

OTHER REFERENCES TO INDEXES

Have any members noted references in book reviews to indexes - or lack of them?

SOME PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH BOOK INDEXING

Full text of talk by Dorothy F. Prescott at the meeting of the Society of Indexers in Australia on 15 June 1973.

I would like to divide my talk into two sections this evening. Firstly, I am going to deal with some of the points connected with publishers which I hope will be useful to others who are engaged in book indexing, and secondly, I would like to discuss those aspects of the task which for me created the greatest problems.

The Publisher

I am addressing these remarks to those who have yet to encounter the publisher, so I hope those experienced persons present will be patient. Before you accept a text be sure to obtain from the publisher, if not a copy of the manuscript, then a very good indication of the nature of the work you are taking on. The publishers may indicate to you that such and such a work should be consulted in order to obtain some idea of the book you are about to index.

Secondly, if you feel on first reading and glancing through the text that it is technically beyond you, don't take on the work. I can't stress this too strongly as it will save you many nerve wracking hours. Generally speaking, conceptual and methodological texts are demanding; add to this the need for familiarity with the technical language of the subject matter, and you will appreciate that it is wise to be honest with yourself about your capabilities.

Assuming that you are happy with the proposition, you should next find out from the publisher the probable length of the book, and the type of index required and length of time allowed by the publisher for the job. At this stage I would say, don't allow yourself to be browbeaten. Some publishers, I am afraid to say, give very little thought to making things easy for the indexers; in fact one almost gets the impression that indexes are unnecessary embellishments that the publisher would rather do without.

In making an estimate of time needed, you will have to take account of other commitments that you have, whether or not you are doing it as a full-time job, or as an extra in the evenings, after a day at work. Bear in mind that it is not wise to do more than three hours' continuous indexing as mistakes creep in as your attention lapses. Librarians will appreciate it when I say that like filing, indexing should be done in short, sharp bursts.

The length and complexity of the text are further factors that need to be taken into account. If both factors exist, the indexing rate will be appreciably slower than for a simple straight forward work.

In making any estimate do not allow the publisher to tell you that there are so and so number of galleys, and the probable number of pages will be triple the number of galleys. This is all very well if the text is one dealing with philosophy or theology where it would be most unusual to have diagrams, illustrations etc. but for a subject like geography where the text is liberally studded with maps, charts, diagrams, illustrations and photographs, it can be downright misleading and cause you to seriously underestimate the amount of work to be done.

You are now in a position to make an estimate of the time you think would be needed to do the work adequately and at a reasonable rate. At this point you are generally told that the index has to be completed within so many days. If the demand is outrageous, which it quite often is, say so. I usually say that I will need so many days to do the work and I am quite adamant about it, but stress that I will do my best. Publishers' schedules, we all realise, are necessary evils and should not be upset, but too often the poor indexer suffers because of them.

I think our newly formed Society could certainly do something to make life easier for the individual indexer. What I would like to see is some form of suggestion sheet issued in the name of the Society incorporating ideas that publishers might like to implement in their procedures to improve the efficiency and work situation of the indexer. It can ultimately only be of value to the publisher to make things easier for the indexer.

One suggestion that I would like to see adopted is provision of a manuscript for the indexer very early in the proceedings, before printing has started. If it is too much to ask the author to produce another copy of his manuscript, then perhaps the author's copy could be given to the indexer to read while the galleys are being set up. This would be most helpful to the indexer, as the initial reading could be completed before the galleys were sent. It is most important that the initial reading be done to get the feel of the book, to note the important topics and the vocabulary likely to be used as headings.

I think it might also be helpful to take a stand against practices such as indexing from galleys, which add enormously to the task and also increase very much the possibility of errors being introduced into the index, apart from the ludicrousness of trying to interpolate x number of different sized diagrams into the text, and finishing up with three hundred pages instead of the one hundred and eighty which the publisher had indicated at the outset.

Indexers can help themselves by asking the publisher to let them have fore-words, prefaces, introductions, contents pages, lists of figures diagrams, illustrations and maps, footnotes, addenda and appendices. All these additional items should be indexed with as much care as the text.

Very often, however, these are some of the last items to come from the printer. Provision of the contents page would be very helpful early in the course of indexing; likewise the introduction, which in some cases can be enormously informative.

It would also be helpful to know when a publisher does not intend to make a list of figures or diagrams, as it then becomes even more important that they be adequately indexed. Too often all one receives are the page proofs, and one is ignorant of the existence of these other items, in some cases unfortunately until it is too late. This haphazard method of operating can only lead to inefficiency which could be easily overcome by the use of a checklist of items to be sent to the indexer, which he could then mark off as he receives them.

On receipt of the galleys the indexer is in a position to work out how many pages per hour he will need to index in order to complete the work on schedule. It is at this stage that you must ensure that you have received or know of the existence of all the extras that have been mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs. It is most important that the indexer be alert to this problem; he will save himself much trouble by so doing.

As regards remuneration for work done, I think the Society can help the individual by having a scale of fees that should be subject to revision with cost of living increases, etc., which the individual indexer can quote to the publisher as being according to the Society's recommendations for payment to indexers.

Perhaps at the end of this talk, we could discuss prevailing rates in relation to current conditions.

Moving on to mention next the acceptance by some publishers of the fact that the index may be created by some other person than the author, the credit for the work should be indicated at the head of the index, rather than in the acknowledgments, which was the traditional place.

I am sure that some of you must have noticed in the most recent issues of the 'Indexer' the news that the publishers, Harrap and Hutchinson, have agreed that the name of the indexer be printed at the head of the index. I recently persuaded M.U.P. to do likewise, but they obviously thought I was a trifle avant-garde, to suggest such a thing. However, can I urge you all to do likewise? Corporate efforts of this nature are more likely to be effective than the occasional encounters of the lone indexer with the publisher; now we have a Society, let it work for us.

And finally, on the same theme of recognition, whose is the copyright? May I refer you to the leading article in the October 1972 issue of the 'Indexer' which discusses this at length. Certainly as far as I am concerned this matter

has never been raised because I prepared the indexes for my husband who was the author, in whom the copyright was vested. However, in the latest piece of work that I have done I note that the publishers have assumed the copyright, although my work was commissioned and paid for by the author (in this particular instance, not my husband).

There are two points concerned here. Firstly, the recognition that the index is a piece of original work that is the possession of the indexer unless he relinquishes it to the author or publisher in return for a fee. Should the indexer therefore ask for copyright when he makes an index? I should be glad if this could be discussed further during the question time.

Indexing Methods

Turning now to the actual methods employed, I propose to touch on those points which as a newcomer to the game caused me most anxiety.

The length of the index: This is sometimes left to the indexer's judgement, which is not altogether as straightforward as it might sound, especially if one has doubts as to whether one is over-indexing or under-indexing. The best thing to do under those circumstances is to find a book of comparable length and type and examine the length of its index.

M.D. Anderson in her book on indexing has this to say; "It is better to calculate (the relative length of the book to the index) in lines, for an index is almost always printed in smaller type than the text. The number of lines from the top to the bottom of a page of index, multiplied by the number of pages in the index, and expressed as a percentage of the approximate number of lines in the rest of the book, gives a rough estimate of the relative length of the index."

"Using this method of reckoning, it is found that short indexes run from 1% to 3% of the text, indexes for many 'serious' books for the general reader from 4% to 7 or 8%, and those for specialised textbooks up to 15%".

Let us take an example, suppose that the book has 290 pages, with 43 lines to the page; this gives a total of 12,470 lines. The index has 9 pages, with 60 lines to the page, making a total of 540 lines in the index; 540 as a percentage of 12,470 is 4.3, so the index could be described as being of medium length.

Bear in mind that the length of the index is affected by the style of indexing. There are two methods, the set-out and the run-on. The set-out, in which subheadings are printed on individual lines, will obviously take up more space than the run-on index, where the entries are set out in paragraph form. Find out from the publisher what his preference is for style and adapt the number of entries according to the style chosen.

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A word about sub-headings at this point. If you are indexing in the run-on style, try to avoid sub-sub-headings, which are difficult to read in this type of index. If the choice is left to you to make there is no doubt of the superiority of the set-out style for clarity and ease of consultation.

The functions employed: These are twofold; analysis and synthesis. On reading the text one gathers together many terms that are to be used in the index. At a later stage you have to present these in the form most useful to the reader.

If we look at analysis first, there are certain situations of which we must be aware. Firstly, the author's intentions must be represented by the use of words and phrases, some of which will not even appear in the text. However, do not let that deter you from using terms which may very well be applicable to the subject matter in hand.

Secondly, be aware of remarks that are not in themselves explicit, but have disguised information. And in contradistinction, avoid indexing names which appear to have but a passing interest; weigh this advice against that which states all names of persons and places must be indexed; the best advice is to use your common sense and ask yourself if I made such and such an entry would the reader look for it.

While you are asking yourself this question remember that there are two categories of reader; the one who has read the book and wishes to refer to something that he read in the text, and the reader who has not read the book, but who wants to find out whether it deals with an aspect of the subject in which he is interested. You will be asking yourself at this stage what should go into the index and what can safely be left out. Because an entry may have only one page reference after it beware discarding such an entry if you reach the point of having to prune the index, such an entry can be most important because it is the only reference made.

Having made all your entries you are now faced with the decision, shall I make a straight forward alphabetical sequence of entries, or should I group some in what seems to be the most natural sequence. I find that I use both methods, so that if I have an entry under the specific alphabetical position, if it is also part of a larger subject treatment I will place it there also. One has to be judicious in the selection of terms for which this treatment is reserved, generally they are the most important facets of the subject matter treated in the text.

An example may make this point clearer:

physical-geographic regionalization

analytical, 212

azonality in, 210-11

branch, 219, 222, 227

These facets of physical-geographic regionalization will also appear in the index under

analytical regionalization 212

azonality

in regionalization 210-11

branch regionalization 219, 222, 227

This type of treatment which employs a certain amount of classification is of help in a text that is to be used both by specialists in the subject, who will be familiar with the terms, and by students to whom the study of the subject is a new field.

Having touched on these two facets of the work I will quickly give you a run through of the methods which I employ when indexing, and the materials used.

The Method

1. Read through the text and tick entry words. You can make marginal notes if you wish at this stage, such as possible references, and note synonyms. Try and get a manuscript copy for the initial reading.

This will mean that you do not have to wait until the galleys are available for the first reading. This method means that where more than one person is working on the text, the first can make the pertinent decisions as to the entry words, while the second can draft the full entries.

2. After the initial reading you will be familiar with the vocabulary and the structure of the text. This initial reading is very important and should not be dispensed with. The second stage is the drafting of the full entries from the entry words previously noted. When doing this bear two things in mind: they should be as specific as possible and brief. It is better to make several specific entries than one comprehensive one, such as electoral boundaries, international boundaries, national boundaries, provincial boundaries, rather than the entry boundaries.

Materials

You can either use the conventional library catalogue card, or continuous horizontally perforated stationery or sheets of quarto or foolscap paper. You will need a filing drawer or an old shoe box if you use cards. If you use paper you will need shallow filing tray divided into sections corresponding to the letters of the alphabet. Guide cards will be needed for each letter of the alphabet and also some extra blank ones on which you can write particular subdivisions for large blocks of entries under one letter.

If you are indexing onto cards you will now have to make the decision, do you keep one card for one subject, and pull it out each time a mention is made of the subject, or do you make a fresh card for every reference to the subject and then sort them all at the end of the work? If you decide on the former

method then you may have some trouble finding the card if you do not keep your cards in alphabetical order.

This raises the question at what stage do you put your cards into alphabetical order? At the time you make the entry, or at the end of the page, or at the end of the chapter? There are I think very pertinent reasons why you should keep your cards in page order.

- a) if you are interrupted in your work, you will know exactly where you have stopped.
- b) if you become aware at some stage that a particular topic is important, and you did not index the earlier mentions of it then you will need to go back over your work to pick up the citations. If your cards have been sorted into alphabetical order you will not be able to see whether or not your early indexing has been too cursory. This inevitably happens, it doesn't matter how careful one has been, because one is still getting the balance of the index at this stage.

I tend as a result to keep my cards in page order until the end of the chapter. I might even do some editing of the main entries at this stage to reduce the number of cards that will finally have to be handled. It will really depend to some extent on the length and number of chapters in the book. If there were many small chapters it would obviously not be worth while doing this.

For those who choose to use continuous stationery or paper that at a later stage will be cut into slips, then every mention of a subject will need an entry. Using this method you could finish up with many entries for each term which then have to be collected and typed onto one entry. It seem to me an enormous amount of work, but then I have not tried the method so am not in the position of being able to give you first hand advice.

One of the advantages of this method is that you can get four or six entries on a page, depending on whether you are using quarto or foolscap paper. These sheets are quicker and easier to handle than many small cards, they make revision of one's work quicker and easier. The checking of page numbers is speedier where sheets are handled in preference to cards and the cut slips are said to be as easy to handle as cards for sorting.

3. Having made all your entries the next job is to sort them all into alphabetical order. If the entries have been made onto sheets of paper then you will need to assemble these in batches, and after having checked that the page numbers are in strict arithmetical order, they can then be cut up, several slips at a time, and then sorted into alphabetical order.

4. The cards or slips are now ready for editing. During this stage identical entries will have all the page references transferred onto one card. Then arrange groups of words having the same entry-word into order for subentries. If you have used one card for several aspects of a subject then the final alphabetical arrangement can be speeded by numbering the subentries according to their arrangement in the alphabet, and making references on the card. This card will then be filed under the various letters of the alphabet according to the references to be made. As each reference is made the card is then refiled under the next to be made and finally under the main heading.

5. Make a final recheck of the alphabetical order and subentries before either numbering the cards, if they are to be sent straight to the printer, or typing up the index.

If the cards are to be sent to the printer number each one in the top right hand corner in a distinctive coloured pencil, that can in no way be confused with the page numbers.

If the index is to be typed it should be set out as follows:

It should be on quarto paper, in a single column, double spaced. Indent subentries two spaces for each step of indentation. If entries run-over indent them the same number of spaces. Use capitals only for proper names. Leave two lines between the end of entries under one letter and the first entry under the following letter. Number each page of the typewritten index to guard against any accidents, and make either a carbon or xerox copy for safe keeping.

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