

SOCIETY OF INDEXERS IN AUSTRALIA

All correspondence regarding The Society of Indexers (England), The Society of Indexers in Australia and the *Newsletter* should be addressed to H. Godfrey Green, 35 Rosedale Road, Glen Iris, Victoria 3146.
Phone: 25 3314.

*Absente auxilio perquirimus undique frustra,
Sed nobis ingene indicis auxilium est.*

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER TWELVE

FREE TO MEMBERS

APRIL, 1975

THE ROLE OF THE INDEX AND THE GOOD BOOK

THIS is the subject Miss Ann Godden, Publisher, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd., has chosen for her talk at the next meeting of the Society in the Conference Room of the Library of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, first floor, 368 Swanston Street, Melbourne, on Thursday, 17 April, 1975 at 7.45 p.m.

This follows the revelation of the indexing problems faced by the reference library of a big metropolitan newspaper in the paper presented by Mr. Keith Sandford, the Chief Librarian of *The Age*, Melbourne's oldest morning newspaper, and ably read in his unavoidable absence by Mrs. Dorothy F. Prescott. Mr. Sandford's paper forms the supplement to this *Newsletter*.

NEW MEMBERS

A CORDIAL WELCOME is extended to Miss Mary T. Doolan, O.I.C. of the Publications and Information Section of the Department of Education, Canberra; Mr. John H. Hawker, Compilation Manager for Peter Isaacson Publications; Mr. Philip E. Sydenham, Children's Librarian in Sunshine Central Library, Victoria; and the University of Queensland Library.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

MEMBERS will note that subscriptions for 1975-76 are due on 1 April. Membership rate remains the same: \$5.50 a year. To this should be added \$2.00 to cover bank and mailing charges and *The Newsletter*. Cheques, in my name, should reach me as soon as possible for forwarding to England.

To Members in Victoria - You are cordially invited to come and to bring a friend to hear Miss Ann Godden, and to share in the discussion, coffee, biscuits and fellowship that follows.

FILL IN AND RETURN THIS SLIP ON OR BEFORE 9 April, 1975
to Mr. H. Godfrey Green, 35 Rosedale Road, GLEN IRIS, VIC. 3146

will*

I will not* be attending the meeting of the Society of Indexers in Australia on Thursday, 17 April, 1975.

will*

I will not* be bringing a guest to this meeting.

(Signed)

* strike word(s) which are not applicable.

INDEXING AND A NEWSPAPER REFERENCE LIBRARY

PAPER presented by Mr. Keith Sandford, Chief Librarian of the Melbourne *Age* and read by Mrs. Dorothy F. Prescott to the Society of Indexers in Australia in the R.M.I.T. Library Conference Room, 25th February, 1975.

MAY I commence with heartfelt apologies to Mr. Green and the members present for the unfortunate situation that prevents my presenting this paper in person, and my thanks to the member who has undertaken the unenviable task of reading it.

When looking for a suitable quotation it is difficult to pass that master of the English language William Shakespeare, who has Nestor, in Act Three of *Triolus and Cressida*, pronounce,

*" . . . and in such indexes, although small pricks
to their subsequent volumes, there is seen
the baby figure of the giant mass
of things to come at large . . . "*

In the broadest sense of the term *The Age* Library could be considered an index to the newspaper, for in essence this is what we are engaged in each and every day. It might at this point be useful to provide a simple outline of the daily workings of the library.

We should consider the day's edition of the newspaper as our basic input material. This material, which is in fact multiple copies of all the daily papers published in Melbourne, together with sundry others, is classified, cut and filed into individual subject files that have grown into a continuing record of the paper's content. Simple as this is to relate these procedures occupy the working time of seven staff members. But it is not so much the procedure that needs to be analysed but the philosophy that supports that procedure.

As a special library working within a commercial organisation we are required, as our prime objective, to service the needs of the company; we are required to provide a reference service in support of those staff members working towards the publication of each day's paper offering fast and efficient reply to a multitude of queries, that can range from an ambassador's full name and title, to a complete record of *The Age's* pronouncements on the Newport Power Station, to a record of a past statement by a public figure that has now been contradicted; feature writers also expect to find much of their background material readily available and staff from other sections of the company utilise us as a basic reference facility.

We are, however, seen in a different light by the general public, as a cross section of my correspondence will show:

- * a grade five pupil writes with a simple request for information for a project on Communication in Australia
- * a young high school intellectual hoping to have his assignment done for him by asking for answers to the following: -

1. What was the date of the Concorde's arrival in Australia.
2. Who was the Frenchman who flew over the English Channel for the first time in 1909.
3. What do the initials 'SNECMA' stand for.
4. Name the town in France where the curtains for the Sydney Opera House were made.

and so they continued with four more questions on France and a tertiary student really looking for an easy way out in requesting information on: -

- i. The 19th century Australian New Educationalists, a brief account of these educationalists, their counterparts in America, England and elsewhere.
- ii. Brief account of the educationalist G.W. Rusden, his influence on Australian education.

Each of these correspondents, along with many others, were referred to their local municipal or school/college library.

We are happy, however, to assist with requests for dates of specific articles, with photocopies of material held in our files - provided the information is clear and concise, and in helping the genuine researcher to whom we are a primary source of material. Even so some correspondents become very agitated when their requests are simply beyond our scope. It is almost as if being a newspaper of repute is synonymous with having information on every conceivable subject available for distribution at the drop of a hat, letter or phone call.

IF VIEWING the whole of our library operation as the compilation of an index is asking the imagination to stretch too far, may I console you by explaining that the term is used in a stricter sense when referring to the cumulative lists that are compiled to give ready reference to certain regular features published in the paper. We have an index to film reviews published in *The Age* from 1956; and for theatre reviews from 1960, access to these reviews is through the film or play title. Book reviews from 1961 are available with access by title or author and in the last year we have established indexes to Car Road Tests, the special Supplements and the various series of articles, including the Insight articles, produced by our staff writers. We are also building indexes, or more strictly lists of groups of prominent people, such as Justices of the Peace, that are not readily available elsewhere and should contribute to the authority of reportage in the paper.

All these indexes assist our access to the filed material from which we supply copies of the articles as required. All of this is in the present, but there is always the need to consider the future. Apart from the continual review of current activities we are presently engaged in the planning of a major step forward for us and I hope for indexing in general. *The Age* is very keen to publish a regular Index to *The Age*. Our plans have been somewhat constricted by the current economic situation, but we are considering, initially, a subject index similar to that provided by our filing system, published half-yearly.

As you are no doubt aware, since the cessation of *The Argus Index* in 1949 there has been no published index to an Australian newspaper, though the Sydney Morning Herald has maintained a card index since early this century. This gap in research material is sorely regretted by most researchers.

It is planned to compile the index on cards and then utilise our computer typesetting equipment to print the index, though consideration is being given to the use of the PRECIS II indexing system to computerise the undertaking.

Finally, along with my apologies and thanks for your forbearance, may I offer some pointers which you might include in discussing this paper and on which I would appreciate some feedback. A) suggestions for the improvement of our current indexing activities and B) the members' thoughts on our plans for an Index to *The Age*.

To conclude, should the Society of Indexers feel the need for militant action, we could do no better than follow the example in this quotation from Lord John Campbell in the Preface of Volume 3 of The lives of the Chief Justices of England.

"So essential did I consider an index to be to every book, that I proposed to bring a bill into parliament to deprive an author who publishes a book without an index of the privilege of copyright, and, moreover, to subject him for his offence to a pecuniary penalty".