

AusSI History

by Jean Hagger

The Australian Society of Indexers was formed at a meeting held at CSIRO in Melbourne on 27 April, 1976. Twenty-two people were present and apologies and correspondence from a number of individuals and organisations were tabled. The meeting was chaired by Peter Dawe.

This meeting was a follow-on from one held on 12 November, 1975, which had been called to consider the future of the Society of Indexers in Australia. This Society had been formed in December 1972 by Harold Godfrey Green, research journalist and indexer, who was the Corresponding Member in Australia for the Society of Indexers. Realising the need for indexers to have a support network to help them overcome the problems of working in isolation, he contacted members of the Society of Indexers in Australia. They voted to form an association for the purpose of meeting regularly to present papers and hold discussions on topics of interest to indexers. The contribution of Godfrey Green to this Society was phenomenal, to say the least. He was in effect its Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor of the Newsletter, a bi-monthly publication which provided not only news about the Society but also the texts of papers presented at meetings. These in themselves are a valuable resource, from the one delivered by Jean Uhl on the indexing of criminal records to that by Josephine McGovern on indexing in a parliamentary library.

In September, 1975, upon his remarriage and move to the Victorian rural town of Maryborough, Godfrey Green resigned from his position of Corresponding Member in Australia of the Society of Indexers, naming Jean Uhl as the Interim Corresponding Member to take charge of correspondence and other records until members had a chance to air their views on the future of the Society. At that time, there were 78 members, both individual and corporate, resident in most states with the largest number in Melbourne.

A special meeting on 12 November, 1975, chaired by Henry Thorburn, formed an interim committee to prepare an agenda for a meeting to be held in April 1976, to consider the Society's future existence and activities. As stated at the beginning of this article, the meeting was duly held and motions to form the Australian Society of Indexers and to dissolve the Society of Indexers in Australia were passed. A constitution was approved and proposals for a programme of activities were discussed. Office bearers were elected as follows: President, Clyde Garrow; Vice President, Jean Uhl; Hon. Treasurer, Joan Haughton; Hon. Secretary, Sylvia Ramsden; general committee members, Coryl Muntz and John Hawker.

The first and second annual reports indicate that the new Society was 'quick off the mark'. Quarterly meetings were held at which guest speakers gave interesting papers; a Newsletter edited by John Simkin quickly became the life-line of the widely spread membership. Probably its most notable achievement was its affiliation with the Society of Indexers.

It is not the purpose of this article to list the many achievements of the Society since those early days. These are well documented in annual reports and the Newsletter. The archives of the Society from its establishment in 1976 to the transfer of the National Executive to the New South Wales Branch in 1996 are lodged in the Archives Section of the State Library of Victoria. The story of the Society is best summed up in the words of the 19th century poet, David Everett:

Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow.

Jean Hagger, May 29 2000.