

Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

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February meeting: Melbourne Indexers Challenge

The indexing challenge was in two parts. The first bit was to encourage members to index a small publication before the meeting. At the meeting the indexes were compared and assessed.

The publication

The publication *Yalukit Willam: river people of Port Phillip* by Meyer Eidelson (City of Port Phillip, 2014) is on local Aboriginal history in the Port Phillip area. It is 100 pages and contains illustrations and maps. The book talks about the Yalukit Willam of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation with other neighbouring clans. It can be read at http://heritage.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Aboriginal_heritage/Yalukit_WillamThe_River_People_of_Port_Phillip and is available in a printed form. The printed version has an additional map at pages 96-97 and the Aboriginal cultural map starts on page 98 (page 96 on website). Otherwise, on quick inspection the publications look the same.

Look at the publication

The first stage in assessing an index is to flip through the publication and see what sorts of things it covers. Are there special features

that should be indexed? What sorts of things will the indexer need to consider? Who do you think the publication is aimed at?

Some of the things to notice include the following:

- There is a mix of Aboriginal and English names, including variations.
- The publication covers the Aboriginal clans in the area, their culture including language and sites of significance in the area.
- There are quotes and sections written by different authors.
- Some illustrations are general, while others are of works of art or of people.
- There are maps, including inside front and back covers. Some with detailed keys with information about what is at a particular location.
- Plants are mentioned with common and Aboriginal names.
- Appendices start on page 78 and include useful material.

It is reasonable to assume the publication is aimed at those interested in the local history

with trails and maps to encourage a closer exploration of the area.

Think about the index

Having looked at the publication how would you index it? How would you handle the items listed above? What things are important to index in a publication of this type?

Some things you can consider include:

- Do you index under Aboriginal names for things or English names or double post?
- Should Aboriginal names be in italics?
- There are lots of names to index.
- How do you refer to illustrations or maps?
- If using different notation, you need to mention it in the introduction to the index.
- The publication is full of snippets of interesting details. How much needs to be indexed given the type of publication?

It was suggested that the index should be assessed using the criteria created for the 2016 John Simkin Medal and available at <https://www.anzsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/John-Simkin-medal-criteria-2016.pdf>

At the meeting there was good discussion comparing the indexes. With only three entrants it was decided not to choose a winner. Some of the comment included:

- Great to have three indexes to compare and they were different. Names of indexers was not mentioned.
- Indexing all names important – all three indexers did that.
- Index 1 was very detailed – perhaps little too detailed for size of book. Hence showed what other indexes didn't cover in such detail.

- Index 2 was missing a couple of the general subject terms.
- Good discussion on different styles, that was useful to those new to indexing who had been exposed to US styles, such as see/see also in lower case and italics. Also font changes in index 3 with subheadings. Pointed out if consistently used shouldn't be seen as errors.
- Should Aboriginal names be in italics? Not sure we reached a conclusion as there was inconsistency in use in the text.
- Index 3 had used other sources to add Christian names and correct details of Acts mentioned.
- Did local knowledge make it easier to index? A few of us live in the surrounding area and are familiar with the locations and several of the Aboriginal terms, such as Ngargee, as used as name of local festival. It was decided that this probably wasn't a big advantage to indexing the publication.
- The version on the web was difficult to use as couldn't download or search the file.
- The inconsistencies in this publication added to the difficulty.
- If we do this exercise again, pick a less detailed publication.
- Criteria for assessment was detailed, but parts shouldn't be equally weighted to obtain score.
- Not enough time for full study of indexes. Participants glad to have copies of indexes to study at their leisure.
- I got the feeling thought to be useful discussion.

Mary Russell

Indexes through publishers' eyes seminar

On Friday 1 September, we are planning to hold a one day seminar learning publishers' thoughts on indexes. It will be at CAE in Flinders Lane from about 9:30 to 4:30.

The aim is to explore indexes from a publishers' perspective by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. Why do they include an index with their publication?
2. Who decides it should have an index?
3. How is the budget for the index determined?
4. Who pays for the index?
5. How do they decide who will compile the index?
6. How is the author involved in the process?
7. Describe your experiences working with professional indexers?
8. What happens when you receive the index?
9. How is the index set out and prepared for publication?
10. Do you have a fixed house style for the layout of the index and notation, such as bold or italics for illustrations?
11. What happens once the index is set?
12. What feedback have they received about their indexes?
13. What changes do they see in the indexing process in the future?

We hope to get a mix of speakers from trade publishers, government departments and typesetters.

Stay tuned for further details and the cost. In the meantime, put the date in your diaries.

Professional development: Proofreading



As with other forms of writing, indexing necessarily involves delving into proofreading. Of course, some indexers do quite a bit more than others by offering proofreading as a service.

While I've not promoted myself as a proofreader, I have occasionally agreed to

proofread a book while indexing it for a self-publishing author. To do this, I have relied on some basic knowledge gained while working in-house a long time ago, and I have gone the electronic route using PDFs and Adobe's commenting tools.

A couple of recent proofreading job offers from a major publishing company was an entirely different kettle of fish however. It forced me to consider whether I really did want to go down this path, and indeed if my skills were up to scratch. I decided that the only way to find out was to do a proofreading course.

My first port of call was to EditorsVIC (Institute of Professional Editors or IPEd). At

the time there were no courses on offer, however their website did point me in the direction of the UK Society for Editors and Proofreaders' online training program. It offers *Proofreading 1: Introduction*; *Proofreading 2: Progress*; and *Proofreading 3: Mentoring*. (<https://www.sfep.org.uk/training/choose-a-course/>)

Further investigation led me to RMIT's two short courses in proofreading. Appealing to me was the face-to-face delivery of these courses at a city location. *Proofreading – Introduction* is a one day course aimed at those new to proofreading. (https://shortcourses.rmit.edu.au/course_page.php?course=S345098&cbs=8109cefd1756e90c262cd37be5e4db82)

Advanced Proofreading, also one day, requires participants to have either completed *Proofreading – Introduction* or to have some editing and/or publishing experience and to be familiar with proofreading marks. (https://shortcourses.rmit.edu.au/course_page.php?course=s345099)

I could have opted to skip *Proofreading – Introduction* but instead went for broke and enrolled in both. I was not the only one in the industry who did this, as while around half of the participants in *Proofreading – Introduction* were from other professions (a lot of retired teachers!) and exploring new directions, the other half had roles in editing and copywriting. It is perhaps not surprising that I was the only indexer, and as indexing does rate a mention when the publishing process is discussed, it was handy from the trainer's perspective to have an example of our species in the room.

The course had a very practical focus, and included a number of exercises drawn from real-life proofreading jobs. There was good coverage of the role and responsibilities of the proofreader, effective ways of working, use of proofreading marks, common slips, and getting to know your blindspots.

There was also a useful discussion on setting up a freelance business, and those of us with experience of this were invited to share our experiences. We often hear stories about newbie indexers having to let go of early clients because the low rate they offered was not sustainable in the long run. Interestingly, newbie proofreaders offering a low rate to attract a client are advised to make it clear to them that it is an "introductory offer".

A good number of participants from *Proofreading – Introduction* attended *Advanced Proofreading*, held a month later. There was no sign however of those who had been dipping their toes in the water, and the cohort was made up of editors and copywriters, and me as the lone indexer again.

As you would expect, things ramped up a bit, again with lots of real-life proofreading exercises. This included plenty of laughs about things that slip past proofreaders, although on the serious side, some slips are not funny and can result in the pulping of a publication. In fact, one participant was there because of just such an experience.

Advanced Proofreading brought home the need for good grammar skills, and the fact that proofreaders do a lot more than just spot typographical errors and style inconsistencies. To demonstrate the sort of thinking that proofreading can demand, we were given a complex set of instructions for building a model racing car. Correct spelling, punctuation and style were not enough – we had to ensure that all the pieces would indeed connect!

There was also further work on knowing your blindspots. If the exercise designed to highlight these left me astonished at what I'd missed, I was at least in good company. Like indexing, it takes a fair bit of practice to become a really good proofreader.

For indexers, it is not difficult to see that the roles of editor and indexer are distinctly

different. However, the line between editing and proofreading can appear fuzzier, which is why these roles need to be clearly understood. For example, while the proofreader has to resist any urges to edit, he or she is expected to be alert to any changes in language and tone.

The two days spent doing these courses confirmed for me that proofreading is not a service that I'd like to add to my business. While that might sound like a waste of my

time and money, it certainly wasn't. I may not want to be a professional proofreader, but my indexing work will always involve some proofreading. I came away with great notes and a heap of tips and techniques for improving my skills and avoiding slips. In addition, it introduced me (and quite a few of my fellow participants) to something I've long wanted but never knew existed...the FriXion erasable pen!

Nikki Davis

History of The VIC (now Melbourne Indexers)

Asked to write about The VIC (now Melbourne Indexers) for *The Indexer*, Mary Russell and Nikki Davis were prompted to look back at what we have done. The regular meetings

started in July 2009. The startling figure was that we have had over 70 meetings in that time! The article will appear in the March issue of *The Indexer*.

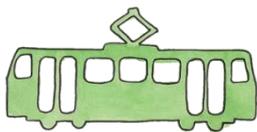
Index omitted

"Postscript: When did publishers stop providing indexes in nonfiction books?"

This was the question Miriam Cosic asked at the end of her review of Kate Grenville's *The*

case against fragrance in *The Weekend Australian Review* 18–19 February 2017, pages 16–17. Obviously, Text Publishing decided this book didn't require an index.

Books on the Rail



Next time you spot an unaccompanied book on the seat of a train, tram or bus, it could well be part of the *Books on the Rail* commuter library, recently launched in Melbourne. Based on London's *Books on the Underground*, the aim of this 'movement' is to

spread the love of books. It has the support of a number of publishing companies and authors, and recently held its first book club meeting on a Glen Waverley line train.

<http://www.booksontherail.com/>

Upcoming meetings

<p>Wednesday 5 April Updating an index</p> <p>6 for 6:30 pm, Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p>	<p>Last year we learnt how to convert an index to allow it to be imported into your indexing software. Now, how do you actually update the index? What features in Macrex and Sky can assist with this process?</p>
<p>Wednesday 7 June Financial aspects</p> <p>6 for 6:30 pm, Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p>	<p>Various aspects of quotations and charging. Such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging less than quoted or publisher's job budget • Discounts • Company paid super
<p>Wednesday 2 August Cited authors</p> <p>6 for 6:30 pm, Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p>	<p>How and when to include cited authors in the index.</p>
<p>Wednesday 4 October Singular or plural headings</p> <p>6 for 6:30 pm, Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p>	<p>The usual rule is for plural headings. When should headings be singular? For example, 'apple' rather than 'apples'.</p>
<p>Wednesday 6 December Don't make me think!</p> <p>6 for 6:30 pm, Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p>	<p>Take a very poor index and discuss its faults and how it could be improved.</p>

Contributions to *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin* are welcome at melbourneindexers@gmail.com