

# Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

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## Filing Dilemmas

Although A to Z filing sounds easy, indexers occasionally pause and puzzle over the best place to file something. At the March meeting of the Melbourne Indexers, Max McMaster raised a number of filing conundrums.

The first example was for a cumulative journal index entry to the annual Dr Sidney Plowman Travel Award. Do you file it under D (for Dr or Doctor?) or under S or P? Discussion ranged across a number of options, but the consensus was to file it under Dr (as spelt) and not as Doctor, as it was a named event. A cross-reference from Plowman would also be needed.

Staying with the theme of names gave rise to the following series of items based around the names of restaurants, hotels, bars and pubs.

Where should Mr be filed? Do you file it under Mr (as written) or under 'Mi' for Mister (as spelt out)?

Mister Jennings (restaurant)  
Mr Chow (restaurant)  
Mr Fogg's of Mayfair (bar)  
Mr Fogg's Tavern (bar)

Solution: file as written.

Should the same logic be applied to the following St. entries?

St. Errmin's Hotel (hotel)  
St. James's Hotel and Club (hotel)  
St. John (restaurant)  
St. John Bread and Wine (restaurant)  
St. Martin's Lane (hotel)  
St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel (hotel)

Solution: file as written.

In a similar manner, how should these be filed?

No. 5 Maddox St (apartment)  
No. 11 Cadogan Gardens (hotel)  
No. Ten Manchester Street (hotel)  
Number Sixteen (hotel)

Solution: treat the 'Ten' as a numeral, and file No. 5, No. 10 and No. 11 in numerical order, under 'No'. File 'Number Sixteen' as written, under 'Nu'.

With the indexing of the *AusSI Newsletter* under way, a dilemma occurred with the filing of AusSI and its previous incarnation of AUSSI. Pushing the example further gave rise to the following:

AUSI 2  
aussi 8  
Aussi 4  
AusSI 6  
ausSI 10  
AuSsi 12  
aUsSi 14

In what order should the acronyms be filed?

Solution: file upper case letters before lower case letters. This gives the following results.

AUSSI 2  
 AuSsl 12  
 AusSI 6  
 Aussi 4  
 aUsSi 14  
 ausSI 10  
 aussi 8

Farm\$mart  
 farms  
 FarmBlitz  
 farm trees  
*Farming Today*  
 Farm Tree\$ Planning Service

The results will differ depending on whether you file according to ISO 999:1996 (AS/NZS 999:1999) or *Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)*. In CMS the \$ is treated as a character and files before alphabetical letters, whilst in ISO the \$ is ignored in filing.

The filing of symbols when they occur in the middle of an entry can also cause difficulties. For example, how do you treat the \$ symbol in the following entries?

Letter-by-letter (CMS)	Letter-by-letter (ISO)
Farm\$mart	FarmBlitz
FarmBlitz	<i>Farming Today</i>
<i>Farming Today</i>	Farm\$mart
farms	farms
Farm Tree\$ Planning Service	Farm Tree\$ Planning Service
farm trees	farm trees

Word-by-word (CMS)	Word-by-word (ISO)
Farm Tree\$ Planning Service	Farm Tree\$ Planning Service
farm trees	farm trees
Farm\$mart	FarmBlitz
FarmBlitz	<i>Farming Today</i>
<i>Farming Today</i>	Farm\$mart
farms	farms

### Stop words

The second part of the presentation dealt with the contentious issue of stop words in the filing of subheadings. Stop words are generally prepositions, conjunctions and articles. Whether they should be ignored in the filing of subheadings has been debated by indexers since time immemorial.

Checking the authoritative indexing literature on the topic gives contradictory advice. Some authors suggest including stop words, others suggest treating them as ordinary words, and some just take a sit-on-the-fence approach and say they may or may not be ignored

depending on context. One author even suggests relying on the advice of the publisher.

With such conflicting opinions, what approach should indexers take? Editors and publishers rarely provide an indexing brief with this level of detail, leaving indexers floundering. As a result, we fall back on our indexing software, as stop words have been incorporated into the filing rules of the three major packages – Cindex, Macrex and Sky Index.

Table 1 lists the default stop words ignored in filing by each software package. (I should point out that indexers are able to edit their

respective list of stop words at their discretion.)

**Table 1. Default stop words ignored in filing**

Stop word	Cindex	Macrex	Sky Index
a	✓	✓	✓
against	✓		✓
an			✓
and	✓	✓	✓
as	✓	✓	✓
at	✓		✓
before	✓		✓
between	✓		✓
by	✓		✓
during	✓		✓
for	✓	✓	✓
from	✓		✓
in	✓	✓	✓
into	✓		✓
of	✓	✓	✓
on	✓	✓	✓
or		✓	✓
the	✓	✓	✓
to	✓		✓
under	✓		✓
versus	✓		✓
vs	✓		✓
with	✓	✓	✓
within	✓		✓

Perusal of Table 1 indicates that Sky Index ignores 24 stop words by default, closely followed by Cindex. Macrex ignores considerably fewer stop words – just ten. But “So what?”, you might ask. How do these stop

words affect the indexes we produce? Table 2 compares the implications of these differing approaches, using a fictitious index based around the concept of weeds.

**Table 2. Weeds example filed using the three indexing software packages**

Cindex	Macrex	Sky Index
<p>weeds  before and after spraying, 35  an identification guide, 18  into beautiful lawn, 48  within conservation parks, 65  during drought, 34  as edible plants, 19  on embankments, 100  to end all weeds, 58  against fences, 23  the gardener’s enemy!, 13  from hell, 90  vs hoes, 62  and horses, 87  at lakesides, 74  of Melbourne, 63  a menace to householders, 5  under the microscope, 77  for mulching, 54  or desirable plants?, 81  between paths, 21  in paths, 23  by the side of the road, 9  versus whipper snippers, 109  with yellow flowers, 80</p>	<p>weeds  against fences 23  an identification guide 18  at lakesides 74  before and after spraying 35  between paths 21  by the side of the road 9  or desirable plants? 81  during drought 34  as edible plants 19  on embankments 100  from hell 90  the gardener’s enemy! 13  and horses 87  into beautiful lawn 48  of Melbourne 63  a menace to householders 5  for mulching 54  in paths 23  to end all weeds 58  under the microscope 77  versus whipper snippers 109  vs hoes 62  within conservation parks 65  with yellow flowers 80</p>	<p>weeds  before and after spraying, 35  into beautiful lawn, 48  within conservation parks, 65  or desirable plants? 81  during drought, 34  as edible plants, 19  on embankments, 100  to end all weeds, 58  against fences, 23  the gardener’s enemy! 13  from hell, 90  vs hoes, 62  and horses, 87  an identification guide, 18  at lakesides, 74  of Melbourne, 63  a menace to householders, 5  under the microscope, 77  for mulching, 54  between paths, 21  in paths, 23  by the side of the road, 9  versus whipper snippers, 109  with yellow flowers, 80</p>

Inspection of these indexes shows variable results. Are any of these sequences useful for the reader? Before answering this question, indexers should consider Table 3, which

shows the same weeds index with all stop words treated as ordinary words – that is, filed in strict alphabetical order.

**Table 3. Weeds example filed in strict alphabetical order**

weeds  
a menace to householders, 5  
against fences, 23  
an identification guide, 18  
and horses, 87  
as edible plants, 19  
at lakesides, 74  
before and after spraying, 35  
between paths, 21  
by the side of the road, 9  
during drought, 34  
for mulching, 54  
from hell, 90  
in paths, 23  
into beautiful lawn, 48  
of Melbourne, 63  
on embankments, 100  
or desirable plants? 81  
the gardener's enemy! 13  
to end all weeds, 58  
under the microscope, 77  
versus whipper snippers, 109  
vs hoes, 62  
with yellow flowers, 80  
within conservation parks, 65

Whether we like it or not, the strictly alphabetical index in Table 3 is the most logical and easily understood of the four indexes. None of the indexes in Table 2 provides much assistance to the reader in finding an entry, although the Macrex index comes closest to the strictly alphabetical listing of Table 3, due to the lower number of stop words included.

The major problem with all three indexing software packages is that they assume the average reader knows, through some sort of sixth sense, which words are being ignored and which words are being considered in the filing sequence. As indexers, our job is to try to make the content of a text more accessible, not deliberately put barriers in the way. Critics could argue that the weeds example shown above was extreme, and I would agree. Indeed, in well-structured indexes, you are

unlikely to find more than a handful of stop words in any list of subheadings, so the issue is minimised. Unfortunately, this does not hold true for all types of indexes. Anyone who has been involved with large, cumulative, subject indexes to periodicals would understand the difficulties posed by stop words.

So what are the solutions? Altering the position of the stop words or removing them altogether are two options. For example, the conjunction 'and' could be placed after the first active word in the subheading, without losing meaning. So instead of 'weeds, and horses', the entry could become 'weeds, horses and' without affecting the grammatical sense of the entry. In some other cases, articles or prepositions could be dropped without affecting readability. For example, 'weeds, an identification guide' could become

‘weeds, identification guide’, and similarly, ‘weeds, for mulching’ could, with a slight stretch of the imagination, become ‘weeds, mulching’. For most of the entries though, removing the stop word is not an option, because the stop word is essential for maintaining the grammatical relationship between the heading and its subheading.

Unfortunately, if indexers continue using stop words, there is no easy solution to this filing conundrum. As can be seen from Table 2, each of the indexing software packages produces different results – yet indexers

assume that the software they use is correct. As a result, the only sensible course of action is to do two things. Firstly, minimise the use of prepositions, conjunctions and articles at the beginning of subheadings; and secondly, where these words must be used, file them in strict alphabetical order. How should indexers do this? Simply disable the stop words in your indexing software.

Max McMaster

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## Names, names and yet more names!

As we have seen in Max’s article above indexing names can be a headache. Where do you turn for guidance? Linda Dunn has developed some very useful lists of resources for handling different types of names. All are centrepieces in *The Indexer* (September 2015 to March 2016). They are:

- Name authority control in large projects
- Names and the indexer
- Resources for handling titles to creative works in indexes
- Resources for handling personal names in indexes
- Resources for handling corporate names in indexes
- Resources for handling geographic names in indexes
- Resources for handling event names in indexes

If you don’t subscribe to *The Indexer* these are available in full for free via the website [www.theindexer.org/categories/centrepieces.htm](http://www.theindexer.org/categories/centrepieces.htm).

Yes the March issue is out. It has been available since 24 February. Rather than wait for your print copy to arrive leisurely in Australia, remember you are able to access complete issues online. For details see <http://www.theindexer.org/online.htm>

The Melbourne Indexers Library also has quite a good back run of *The Indexer* available for loan to members.

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## Reawakenings: the revival of Victorian Aboriginal languages

Learn how Aboriginal communities around Australia are reviving their local languages at the State Library of Victoria

Details of the events in April at <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/whats-on/reawakenings-revival-victorian-aboriginal-languages>

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## John Hirst and The Argus index

John Hirst, who died 3 February, 2016, was an Australian academic, historian, and emeritus professor of history at La Trobe University, Melbourne. Of interest to readers is that he headed the project to index *The Argus*. The project ran for 30 years and aimed to fill the index gap from 1860 to 1909 (50 years!).

Details of the project can be found in *The Indexer*, vol. 31, no. 4 December 2013, pages 158–162.

His obituary was in The Age 12 March 2016 <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/obituaries/shunning-awards-historian-set-his-own-true-course-20160310-gnfd9b.html>

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## Upcoming events

<p><b>Wednesday 6 April 6 for 6:30</b></p> <p>Accessing archived journal content using a hyperlinked index</p> <p>Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, Kew</p> <p>Followed by dinner at a local restaurant if you are able to join us</p>	<p>Using the hyperlinked index to issues 1-65 of the <i>Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management</i> magazine as an example, this session will explain how hyperlinks are created and the programming involved. The hyperlinks connect each Word index locator to its specific article. All 65 magazines, in PDF format, are hosted on the Victorian Landcare Gateway's website.</p>
<p><b>Thursday 5 May 2pm</b></p> <p>Tour of Ballarat Mechanics Institute Library</p>	<p>For something different, how about a trip to Ballarat? We will join the weekly tour of the Ballarat Mechanics Institute Library. For further information about BMI see <a href="http://ballaratmi.org.au/education/tours">http://ballaratmi.org.au/education/tours</a> We need to confirm numbers, so please contact Mary Russell if you plan to join us.</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 31 May 2-4pm</b></p> <p>Converting Word indexes to Cindex or Macrex or SKY using IndexConvert</p> <p>Malvern Library, High Street, Malvern</p>	<p>If you have you ever had to convert a Word index back into Cindex or Macrex or SKY, you know this can be a time-consuming task. This scenario arises when it is beneficial to use a previous edition of the index, e.g. for an annual report or a text where the changes are relatively minor, rather than reindexing the whole work from scratch. IndexConvert, created by UK indexer Barry Campbell, will be demonstrated, to show how well it works.</p>

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Contributions to *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin* are welcome at [melbourneindexers@gmail.com](mailto:melbourneindexers@gmail.com)