Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

No. 6, November 2015

Season's greetings

Compliments of the season to all members and friends of Melbourne Indexers. We wish you an enjoyable and relaxing break. Before turning our attention to the December meeting and the program for 2016, this is what we have been up to during October and November:

Rags to Riches walk

At the first Melbourne Indexers meeting in July we discussed how to index an audio tour of St Kilda. It was suggested that we actually do the walk and on 20 October a group of us did that. While there had been a scud of rain late morning the afternoon was fine and warm. Walking around St Kilda, pausing to read about the houses we passed, proved to be very enjoyable. Yes, we did read the script as it proved to be more appropriate for a group event than all trying to listen to the audio. The tour said "Stop at number 7, the house with the rainbow lorikeets in the trees." And there were lorikeets in the trees. The walk concluded near the shops in Acland Street and it was a perfect excuse to sample 7Apples ice cream.

UCB indexing course

The opportunity to discuss the UCB indexing course with an instructor, Max McMaster, and two graduate students, Alisa and Sharon, proved to be very popular. It was lovely to see several editors attending. Here is Max's presentation:

X477: Indexing Theory and Application, the name of the subject, is run by the University of California Berkeley Extension. The Extension part is the continuing education section of UCB. This course was developed by American indexer, Sylvia Coates, and has been running for 10 years. I have been involved for the past 5 years.

The course is a virtual course and must be completed within a maximum of 6 months, but no less than 3 months. Most students take around 5 - 5½ months, but the fastest student I have had completed the course in 4½ months. You may enrol in the course at any time and you work at your own pace. There are 5 instructors for the course – 2 Americans – Sylvia Coates and Fred Liese; 2 Canadians – Heather Ebbs and Ruth Pincoe, and myself, the sole Australian. Unlike most courses where you enrol in a particular subject, which runs for say a semester, the X477 course is different and you enrol with a specific instructor. Sylvia Coates' section is open currently. Once she gets her quota of 10 students, her section will be closed off, and then the next

instructors' session will be opened. Sections usually take between 6 weeks and 3 months to fill. The course consists of 10 online modules. Although the course is American, it includes Australian and Canadian content where it differs from US practice, so students learn what is appropriate for their home country. Students can come from anywhere in the world, but most of the students are from the US and Canada, with a smaller number from Australia and NZ. I have had one student from Egypt.

Within the 10 online modules, there are 9 assignments to be completed, which consists of 6 shorter indexing exercises and 3 major indexing projects. The shorter exercises are designed as learning exercises and can be resubmitted, without penalty, if there are areas that could be improved. The 3 major indexing projects, however, which each comprise indexing an academic journal article or chapter from a book, are one chance only. This is analogous to the situation of submitting an index to an editor.

The initial online module introduces students to the 3 major indexing software packages – Cindex, Macrex and Sky Index, and for the first 3 exercises each of the packages has to be used. After that time, students can choose to use the package of their choice. The first two exercises are on nursery rhymes, which are a lot of fun. Students cover the full range of topics associated with back-of-book indexing, e.g. term selection, indexing specifications, developing your own process and style, embedded indexing and the business aspects of indexing. There is one session on controlled vocabularies and database indexing. The course has a deliberate focus on practical indexing. As such, we push the OHIO method of back-of-book indexing. OHIO stands for Only Handle It Once, which means that you only look at a page of text once in the indexing process. Learning the OHIO approach is difficult, but worthwhile in the long term, as it saves an enormous amount of time.

In addition to the online modules, students are required to attend Office Hours, which is a weekly online chat session, held at 6.00 pm Thursday evening, Pacific Time (San Francisco), which equates to 1.00 pm Friday, Melbourne time currently. Students need to attend a minimum of 3 of the Office Hours sessions, although many students attend a lot more. The sessions are run by one of the 5 instructors in turn, and the topics vary week by week. They might cover problems with assignments, difficulties understanding course notes, meetings attended, finding work,

indexing jobs on the go, etc. There are no restrictions on what students can ask, as long it has relevance to indexing. A transcript of each session is kept, and students are encouraged to look back at earlier sessions.

Because students can enrol in the course at any time, in Office Hours there are likely to be students who are further ahead than yourself in the course. These students may be from your section or from an earlier section. This can be advantageous, as they have already completed the assignment you are working on, so they too can provide valuable input, rather than just relying on the instructor. However, there are disadvantages as well, as those more advanced students may ask about assignments you don't know anything about, so at times you can feel a bit left out.

In addition to Office Hours, students can communicate with their instructor via email, and they are encouraged to do so. The students must also complete a Discussion Assignment after each assignment, which is very much a reflective piece on how they found the assignment. These comments are accessible to all students within their section. There is also a Student Lounge – Open Discussion, which students can use.

This course costs US$695 (around A$975). Although this sounds a lot, when compared to a 2-day ANZSI courses, which we used to run, which costs $500, you can have a 6-month course for around double the money. There is no comparison. As was mentioned in the flyer for the session, the UCB course has the highest success rate for any indexing course in the world, and more importantly, the highest success rate for students finding indexing work afterwards.

Max then handed over to Alisa and Sharon who as graduate students of the course provided their views and general discussion.
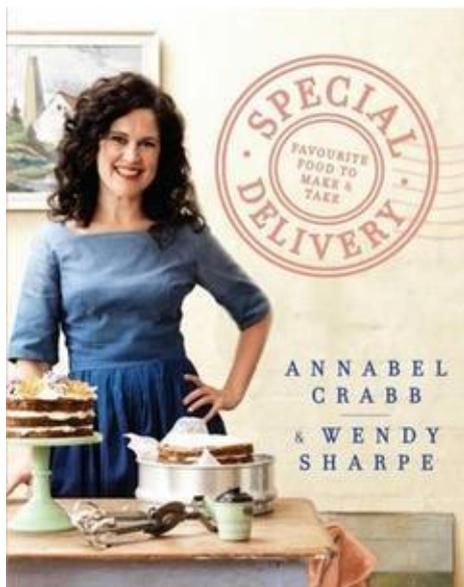
The prospect of having to use three indexing software packages caused some concern. Student editions of the three packages are used and are free to the students to download. Apple users need to run Parallels software to run Macrex and SKY, which are PC only. Indexes are created for nursery rhymes (the first two exercises) using all three packages so

students can focus on the packages. Being forced to create indexes using all three packages proved useful in determining which package to choose to purchase for professional use.

Both graduates took just under six months to complete the course and agreed the time was about right. With reading, exercises, assignments, participation in online sessions and getting used to the software they estimated that they spent on average three to five hours a week on the course. As expected some assignments require indexes to material that is outside their comfort zone, but not unrealistically so. Sharon was so delighted with the detailed comments and guidance she received from her instructor, she shared an assignment she had done well on, but it was covered in comments.

Index discussed on radio

Yes, not only was an index discussed on the radio, it was an unusual index in a cook book! Annabel Crabb, presenter of *Kitchen Cabinet* TV series, has written a book with Wendy Sharpe called *Special Delivery*. The book covers recipes appropriate for 'bring a plate' occasions.

In addition to the usual index Wendy Sharpe suggested including an 'occasion index'. While I'm yet to see the book, I gather this groups appropriate recipes that could be taken in different occasions, such as to new parents, or the overwhelmed.
http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/blueprintforliving/annabel-crabb-on-the-redemptive-power-of-food/6933968

This sounds like it is a perfect example of an index surprise package for the December meeting.

Upcoming meetings

December - Index surprise packages
We will try to move on from the no index surprises one gets and focus on indexes that are different in some way. For example, a book where every entry in the index is a *see* reference. Have you got an example of an indexing surprise package? It doesn't have to be limited to book indexes. Perhaps you have an ebook index or app of a book that is a bit different? Bring along your examples to share.

When: Wednesday 2 December
6.00–6.30 pm Indexing Clinic – free indexing advice.
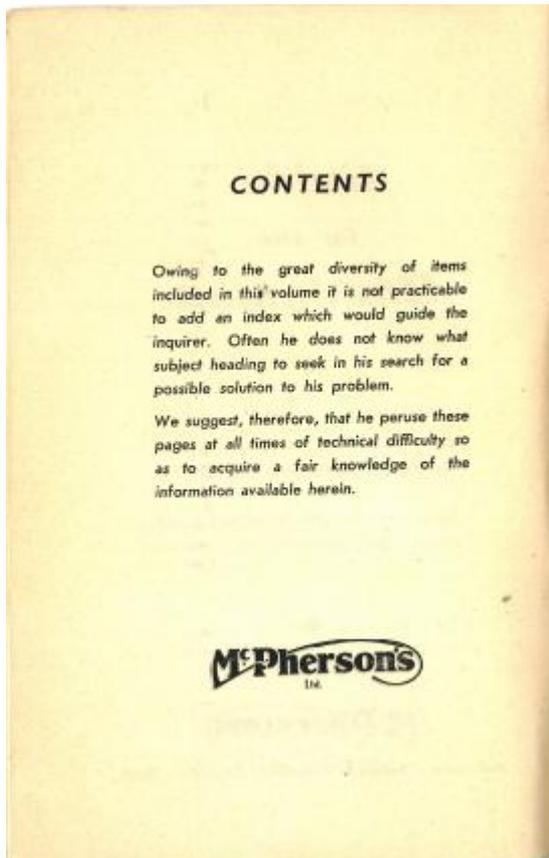6.30–7.45 pm discussion

Where:
The Old Op Shop, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, corner of High St and Pakington Streets, Kew.

Please join us for dinner afterwards, from 8 pm, at Italian restaurant La Q, at own expense (approx. 100 metres from the Church hall, on High Street).

If you can't make the meeting, but would like to share an index, please forward

details and perhaps an Amazon look inside link to Mary Russell [mruss@ozemail.com.au].

Thanks to Bev Mills for sharing this delightful explanation from McPherson's of why their *Guide for the Handyman* was published without an index!

PLEASE NOTE:
There will be no meeting in January

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2016 Program

Group indexing project starts 2 Feb 2016
How do you tackle a task like indexing all the AusSI/ANZSI Newsletters? A few years ago we gave volunteers a year to index. This worked well. Indexed years came back. However, life gets in the way and volunteers reluctantly pulled out. We now have gaps in the years indexed.

For 2016 we thought we would try group indexing sessions to try to index the missing years. How will this work? After

initial guidance, we will start with the first ever AusSI Newsletter and work our way forwards.

BYO laptop with indexing software and join in the group effort.

Never indexed a newsletter before? Don't have a laptop? Not a problem. Come along. We will work in pairs anyway.

Full details will be available in the January issue of the *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin*.

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Library
Outstanding Loans:
Please return any outstanding library books at the next Melbourne Indexers meeting on Wednesday, 2 December 2015.
New Loans:
Although the library will not be available for browsing at the next meeting, items will be available for loan if requests are made in advance. If you would like to loan any items over the Xmas break, or to extend an existing loan, please send details of your request to Mary Russell [mruss@ozemail.com.au] prior to the meeting.

To contribute to
Melbourne Indexers Bulletin
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