Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

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In this issue

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Re April meeting – Updating an index

Many thanks to Mary Russell and Max McMaster for their enlightening session, at the last MI meeting, on the issues associated with updating an index. Their presentations touched on a range of possible scenarios and contained numerous practical tips for beginning and experienced indexers facing the task of updating different types of indexes.

Melbourne Indexer meetings are an invaluable resource for the professional development of indexers. The combination of presentations and general discussion of issues provides an excellent face-to-face forum for the sharing of indexing-related information, and the generation of indexing knowledge. But it doesn't end there. As with any thought-provoking discussion, one continues to reflect on the issues raised long after the session is over. Accordingly, I would like to expand on some aspects of one of the questions raised at the April meeting.[1]

Should you use the previous index?

In their report of the session, Mary and Max (2017: 2) provide the following advice:

> It is essential that you are happy with the previous index. Study the previous index closely. Is it suitable to build on? Would you index it in the same way? You need to feel you will be saving time by using the previous index.

But what does this mean in practice, and does the indexer even have a choice over whether to use a previous index?

Indexer's control over whether to use a previous index

Editors often supply a copy of the index to the previous edition of a text, along with other material—such as the editor's stylesheet—to assist the indexer in compiling a new index. Indeed, having a copy of the previous index can be very useful, especially for beginning indexers, as a guide to the scope, structure, and length of the new index. However, it can also be of little use—except, perhaps, as an example of how *not* to index!

Thankfully, in my experience at least, it is rare to receive an indexing brief from an editor that stipulates that the index be modelled closely on the previous edition's index. On the odd occasion when this has occurred, it has been as a result of a direct request from the author(s). What is far more common is for an editor to request an *update* of a previous index. Such requests tend to be driven by the belief that an update is simpler—and thus cheaper—than the compilation of a new index, rather than any preference that a particular model be followed. In these instances, then, the indexer has considerable control over how they approach the job, and may update the index as requested, or advise the editor that re-indexing would be the more cost-effective option.

Deciding to use a previous index

So how does the indexer decide whether to update a previous index? In general, assessing an index involves a number of steps with each focussing upon different aspects of the index (e.g., accuracy of locators, number of locators per heading, comprehensiveness, structure, consistency of style, cross-referencing, etc.). Assessments may be superficial or in-depth, depending on the reason for the assessment, with the latter being potentially quite time-consuming.

An indexer considering a request for an updated index, however, has only a limited timeframe within which to assess the utility of a previous index. The decision-making process is further complicated by the fact that different types of revisions to a text have different implications for the indexing process, and in many cases different sections within the same revised publication may require different indexing strategies.[2] The primary focus of an assessment of the previous index, then, will vary according to the type of update that is required. An indexer therefore needs to be well-acquainted with the various techniques used in the assessment of indexes, so that they are able to select and employ the most appropriate technique in any particular case.

Below, I describe two different scenarios where updated indexes may be requested, and detail the different approaches to assessment that may be employed in each instance.

Repagination of text

When the major operation involved in the updating of the index is a straightforward repagination (where every page beyond a certain point is moved on by the same number of pages), then the *accuracy* of the locators in the previous index is the key factor in assessing its value as the basis for an updated index. The first issue to be resolved, then, is whether a copy of the previous text is available so that such an assessment can be made.

What is also in question, here, is how much responsibility does the indexer carry for the accuracy of the index? For example, if the accuracy of the previous index cannot be assessed due to the absence of a copy of the previous text, should the indexer go ahead and use the previous index as a basis for compiling an updated index (using indexing software tools rather than close checking of the text)? This issue can be resolved in consultation with the editor and/or author. For instance, they may be able to provide reassurance that the previous index was acceptable, and give the indexer the 'green light' to proceed without checking the accuracy of the previous index.

Alternatively, the editor may be able to provide an electronic copy of the previous text for checking. If numerous inaccuracies were quickly revealed, this alone could provide sufficient grounds for re-indexing the revised text (given the amount of time that would be required to conduct a thorough check of the remaining locators). At the very least, discovery of these errors should provide the spur to then also scrutinise other aspects of the index—such as structure and comprehensiveness—with any further flaws strengthening the grounds for complete re-indexing.

Revisions within text

In the case where a text has had revisions throughout, or additional chapters added, then assessment of the *structure and style* of the previous index should be the first consideration. This is not a simple task, for the indexer must not only make an objective assessment of the structure, they must also make a subjective assessment of whether they will be able to adhere to an identical structure and style. With this in mind, it is important to note the following riders:

- an indexer's background and subject expertise will have a great influence on how they select and organise headings, and what information they file under those terms;
- no two indexers are likely to create an identical index for the same text; and
- if the same indexer was to re-index the same text, it is most unlikely they would create identical indexes.

In line with Mary's and Max's advice, that '*You need to feel you will be saving time by using the previous index'* (2017: 2), the first step in a quick assessment of the structure of a previous index is to examine the cross references. As a useful rule of thumb, poor or inadequate cross-referencing is a fairly reliable indicator of poor overall structure, and a lack of familiarity with the basic rules of indexing. Arguably, extremely poor cross-referencing, alone, could provide sufficient grounds for re-indexing a work.

If the structure of the previous index appears to be sound, the indexer must still assess whether they will be able to weave their own new index entries seamlessly into it. This requires more than a superficial assessment of structure. Speaking from painful experience, it can be all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that updating the previous index will be the quickest option. What is required at this point is scrutiny of the index entries covering key concepts and subjects to determine how closely the previous index fits with your own comprehension and interpretation of the text. The most efficient way of doing this is to index a sample of unrevised text and then compare your effort with the entries in the previous index covering the same page span.

Even if there appears to be a good fit at this point, there may still be many pitfalls ahead. The more sophisticated the text, and the more multifaceted the concepts, the greater the challenges confronting the indexer who chooses to update a previous index. Uneven extrapolation, and conflation or differential treatment of concepts or subjects can be very difficult to avoid.[3] This is especially the case where there is considerable overlap in subject matter or where different terms are used interchangeably in the text.[4] The resulting index may end up being a confused 'hodgepodge', requiring extensive editing, and even partial re-indexing, if it is to be of any use to a reader. Any time that may have been saved by using the previous index is then lost. In fact, the entire exercise will almost certainly take a lot longer than re-indexing the text from scratch.

In judging the best use of their time, then, the indexer must first decide how much time can be allotted to assessing the index. The more time spent assessing the previous index, the less time there will be available for updating or re-indexing. If a decision is made to use the previous index as a basis for the updated index, the indexer must then decide on the balance between 'indexing' time and 'editing' time. If an indexer's strength lies in making rapid 'indexing' decisions, rather than 'editing' decisions, it is always going to be quicker for them to re-index. Alternatively, another indexer might agonise over making indexing decisions, but be very skilled and efficient at editing their work. Whichever the case, judging the best use of your time is a personal decision based on the time available for the job and a clear understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses.[5]

In conclusion, the ease of updating a previous index will generally relate directly to the extent of the revisions and the complexity of the text. Using the previous index as a basis for an updated index may present the best option when working on short and/or relatively simple texts—such as annual reports, textbooks or catalogues—or when mere repagination is called for. In the case of more complex and/or

lengthy texts, or those with extensive revisions—especially where the subject matter falls on the outer frontiers of your expertise—save time and your sanity; re-index!

Endnotes

[1] Here, I may reiterate or recap points made by others during the general discussion at the April meeting. My apologies if any such references are unacknowledged.

[2] See Russell and McMaster (2017: 2) for a list of the possible types of revisions.

[3] For example, one indexer may include all matter related to 'economic policy' and 'economic performance' under the heading 'economy', while the other treats each subject under separate headings. Max McMaster's (2017) comments on extrapolation are also pertinent here.

[4] For example, 'defence policy' and 'security policy', or 'asylum-seeker policy' and 'refugee policy'.

[5] If you are a beginning indexer, it may be a useful learning exercise to attempt to weave new entries into an existing index structure. However, such an activity is probably best reserved for a workshop dedicated to the purpose.

References

McMaster, Max 2017. Indexing Conundrum, *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin* 21: 4.

Russell, Mary, and Max McMaster 2017. April meeting – Updating an index, *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin* 21: 1–3.

Karen Gillen, 13 April 2017

Reviews

Exhibition review: Patrick Pound

Collectors typically collect one sort of item. They collect stamps, sculptures of pigs, old cameras, whatever. As the collection grows, they set boundaries. Perhaps stamps from a particular country or cameras before 1920. Patrick Pound takes collecting to a different level. He collects in themes.

Pound has a large collection of photographs that he has grouped into very specific groups. For example, photos of people where the shadow of the photographer is visible, photographs of planes or lamps, photographs of people reading, photographs of people sleeping or people from behind. These are usually just ordinary photos, sometimes in colour, but usually in black and white. There is something rather fascinating about studying photos grouped in this way.

The exhibition is not just photographs. It has lots of objects, many from the NVG collection. Sometimes their connection is obvious, such as pairs of objects or knife blocks, other times it takes a moment to determine the connection such as a collection of items that all have holes or another collection that all have something to do with falling. Then, as Patrick Pound points out, 'Some things have little to do with each other until they come into contact.' An example of this is a picture of a baseball next to a photo of a round nuclear plant showing similar features.

An exhibition of his collections and installations is on at NGV at Fed Square. It is free and on until 30 July.

Mary Russell

I began indexing professionally in 2014 and, as a relatively new indexer, I am continually assessing and attempting to refine my skills and processes. The title of Kate Mertes' seminar 'Creating and Maintaining Speed' captured my attention as I've lately wondered how to increase my indexing efficiency to make indexing more financially viable. This DVD seminar, recorded back in 2007, offers some useful tips that I've started to integrate into my indexing process.

Mertes begins her seminar by discussing a loose formula for equating pages per hour with an annualised income average. Although a simple and common sense calculation, her approach was one that I hadn't previously formalised for myself in the way of goals and aspirations. At the beginning of my indexing career, I was completely—and necessarily—focused on the rudimentary indexing rules and skills and not on the reality of running a viable business; Mertes' introductory discussion reminds the viewer that the primary focus of this seminar aims to increase indexers' business acumen.

With that said, it's all well and good to say one needs to index this many pages per hour per day per year to pay the bills, but how one increases indexing speed is a prominent question that I think this seminar adequately answers. The pervasive indexing maxim 'it depends' seems to apply to process in much the same way it does to indexing rules, and process decisions seem contingent on both the indexer and each individual index. With that in mind, some of her suggestions resonated with me, while others seemed less applicable. The 2-DVD seminar spans approximately 4 hours, so I won't attempt to summarise the entire discussion, but I urge anyone in need of increasing indexing speed, especially new indexers, to watch this DVD as an adjunct to other forms of professional

development. As a teaser, I'll briefly discuss a few of her suggestions and leave you to glean from the seminar your own applicable strategies.

An indexing mentor once wisely told me that an index is as good as how it's edited. I've found this to be true, as it's often in the editing phase that the thematic and stylistic consistency find form and order; however, I've recently realised that the editing stage ends up being a bulky and time-consuming part of my indexing process and is probably the area in which I can make noticeable changes in efficiency. Mertes offers many suggestions for cutting down on editing time.

A few of her tips include double-checking names as you enter them (and not returning to check them at the end) and checking page ranges and spelling as you go. I've since applied these simple amendments to my process and found them useful in creating a more manageable editing phase. Another suggestion that I found intriguing, but have applied with caution, is her advice to enter double-posted or cross-referenced terms during the editing phase rather than during the entry phase. Her rationale for this is that, while editing, one will check these anyway and that creating the double post or cross reference during the editing phase saves doing double work. This approach requires remembering which terms need to be double-posted or cross-referenced, which prompts Mertes to offer the caveat that, if there's a risk of forgetting to double post or cross reference down the track, it's best to do it while entering terms. Once again: 'it depends.' With that said, I've toyed with a variation on this tactic in my recent projects by entering the term in one place but making a 'query' note to cross reference or double post at the end. I did find this to be more efficient and it resulted in greater accuracy. I would say for those indexers who have an

impeccable memory—as Mertes claims to—making notes would not be necessary.

The well-structured seminar is full of pertinent and easily applicable information and, as part of the Melbourne Indexers' library, is a thrifty and convenient way to spend a half day contemplating the nuts and bolts of indexing efficiency. I hope others find it as useful as I did, and happy indexing!

Alisa Dodge

To borrow this or any other item from the Melbourne Indexers' library, please contact Mary Russell (mruss@ozemail.com.au)

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Book review: *The book of circles* by Manuel Lima

While giving a lecture on visualizations, Manuel Lima was asked why so many were based on circles. This turned out to be the impetus for this book, a fascinating sequel to his earlier book *The book of trees* (reviewed in the September 2016 issue of this Bulletin).

Circles are everywhere. Nature has some wonderful examples such as growth rings in trees or spiral growth of some succulents. Circular clock faces help us tell the time. Different coloured circles are the basis of traffic lights. Concentric circles are used for targets in the game of darts. They are used in signs and symbols such as on/off, male/female or peace. Many companies have logos that are based on a circle.

It is not surprising that circles are used to present all sorts of information, particularly as they can be divided up accurately such as in pie charts. Venn diagrams use overlapping circles to explain logical relationships between different sets. One historic use is by Florence Nightingale. She used circle based diagrams to present the causes of mortality in the army in 1858 and argue that most of the soldiers died from sickness not wounds.

As with his earlier book on tree diagrams, Lima has collected circle diagrams from all eras and all sorts of uses. The diagrams have been grouped into seven families, each with three variations. The families are rings and spirals, wheel and pies, grids and graticules, ebbs and flows, shapes and boundaries, maps and blueprints, and nodes and links. Rather than explain the families any further, I suggest you use the Look Inside feature on Amazon to see them depicted in the contents pages (https://www.amazon.com/Book-Circles-Visualizing-Spheres-Knowledge/dp/1616895284).

The examples within the twenty-one types are shuffled so an old example is next to a new one and an example from biology could be next to an architecture drawing. It makes it a fascinating book to dip into. I was pleased to see the visual index to Stephen Fry's *Fry chronicles* and the *MyFry* app edition is included on page 156. (Demonstration at http://www.stephenfry.com/2010/09/myfry-app-demonstration/)

The book of circles: visualizing spheres of knowledge by Manuel Lima, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2017.

Mary Russell

Melbourne Rare Book Week 30 June – 9 July
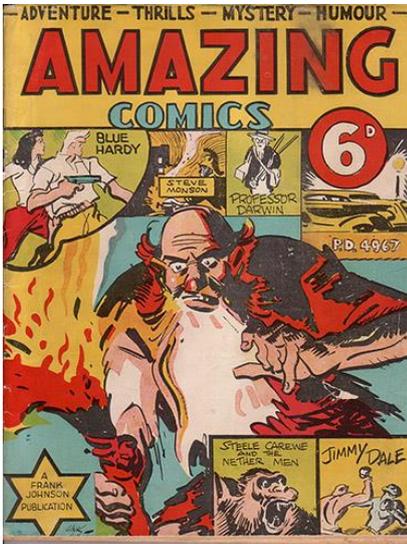
In 2017, over 60 free events will be held at libraries, literary and historical societies and bookshops throughout Melbourne, attracting local, national and international visitors. Melbourne Rare Book Week is a major attraction for book collectors, librarians and all who have a love of words, print on paper and literary heritage.

The 45th ANZAAB Australian Antiquarian Book Fair (Melbourne Rare Book Fair) will be held at the University of Melbourne's historic Wilson Hall, from 7-9 July, 2017. Admission to all events is free.

Bookseller and author Mick Stone's passion for collecting comics is just one of the events on offer. To see the full program, go to http://www.rarebookweek.com/

On the lighter side

Emojipedia (https://emojipedia.org/)

Next time you add an emoji to an email or a text, spare a thought for Jeremy Burge, the man behind Emojipedia. The former web consultant to universities now works full-time documenting every emoji created. Originally from Melbourne, Burge is now based at London's Google Campus, and is a member of the Unicode Consortium Committee that manages emojis. Good thing that advertising revenues pay him a comfortable salary as there are plenty of challenges. Apart from the mountain of work, there are endless modifications, like the one that Apple recently made to the paella emoji on iOS. The shrimp and peas on the original version didn't quite cut it – the traditional dish from Valencia includes chicken, lima beans and green beans.

https://www.businessinsider.com.au/emojipedia-jeremy-burge-emoji-encyclopedia-profile-2016-1

http://zitscomics.com/comics/july-13-2013/

Upcoming meetings

June: Financial aspects of indexing

7 June, 10.30 am – 12.00 pm
Camberwell Library, 340 Camberwell Road, Camberwell

As freelance indexers, we tend to think the actual indexing is the most important part of any job, yet it is the financial aspects that tend to make us or break us. This session looks at the many financial aspects related to indexing. It will cover quoting, invoicing, slow payers, tax deductions, superannuation and a range of financial scenarios, such as:

- You quote for a 200-page annual report and the job comes in at 230 pages. Do you wear the extra time and cost, or charge slightly more than you quoted?

- The actual cost for compiling an index comes in at $1200, but the publisher's budget allows $1800. Do you charge the full amount, charge what it cost you, or decide on a figure in between, e.g. $1500?

- You are approached by a not-for-profit organisation wanting you to index the history of their club/society. They are not in a position to pay for the true cost of the indexing, but the topic is of interest to you. The true cost of the index is estimated to be around $2500, but they can only afford to pay $1500. Do you turn the job down, take the job but put in less detail and effort, or index with the full level of detail and wear the cost?

If you would like to have a light lunch after the meeting, the Ignite Café in the Library complex is the place to go.

We shall be holding our regular indexing clinic for one-on-one guidance from 10.00 – 10.30 am.

Max McMaster

Month	Session	Details
August Details TBC	Cited authors	How and when to index cited authors in the index.
Friday 1 September CAE, Flinders Lane	Indexes through publishers' eyes	Full day seminar
October Details TBC	Singular or plural headings	Usual rule is for plural headings. When should headings be singular? For example, apple rather than apples.
December Details TBC	Don't make me think!	Take this very poor index and discuss its faults and how it could be improved.

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