

Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

2009 – Celebrating 10 years of Melbourne Indexers – 2019

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February meeting: Indexing military history

A small but enthusiastic group of Melbourne indexers met at the Hawthorn Library for our first meeting on 7 February to learn about indexing military history.

Karen Gillen, who has indexed numerous military history texts, led the discussion. The first thing we learned was – there are no definitive guidelines for indexing military subjects. Military history units within the Australian Defence Force do not provide indexing guidelines for their authors, and many publishing houses and authors have their own, sometimes idiosyncratic, styles of indexing that they expect to be followed. Karen showed us an example of an index to a recent military history title published by Cambridge University Press, part of a prominent series on military history, that was full of undifferentiated locators and useless subheadings (what does ‘Australian and Mozambique’ really refer to?) and the *see/see also* references are not only written in US style but are also incorrect! Karen currently has the job of indexing the next book in the series with the challenge of meeting the author’s strict instructions that the index follow the exact same style as the previously mentioned index!

Several books of military history were available for perusal. The oldest was CW Bean’s *The Story of ANZAC*, published in 1921. Some Australian individuals had so much biographical detail attached to their entry in the index (rank, name, birthplace and war arena served in) that we almost didn’t need to read the book! Yet other people from the UK were cursorily entered with just their name and rank. Perhaps because this edition was nearly 100 years old, it was printed as a run-on index, which we found hard to read.

Another volume Karen had picked up to show us was *Australian Military History for Dummies* (yes, there is one!) A brief glance had her wondering who did the index – it was in fact herself! The Dummies guides have strict indexing criteria and a lengthy list of instructions – deviate if you dare!

The *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* describes itself as ‘indispensable’. We disputed that as there were instances where the main headings were not in alphabetical order. Companion volumes generally have text that is laid out alphabetically, so the index tends to list concepts.

Jeffrey Grey’s *Military history of Australia* (OUP, 1990) included long lists of British regiments whereas David Cameron’s *Australia on the Western Front* had a separate index for military units.

Anzac Girls by Peter Rees (Allen & Unwin, 2008) had 'see under individual names' and then listed the names with no locators, meaning another search under each individual name – perhaps a Table misplaced. Paul Kennedy's *Engineers of Victory* (Allen Lane, 2015) had 16 pages of images with no reference to the plates or the people depicted. Chris Couthard-Clark's *The Encyclopaedia of Australia's Battles* (Allen & Unwin, 1998) combined two indexing formats: normal headings with run-on, headings in caps with indented – one way of presenting dense information with limited space.

The main challenge of indexing military histories related to the following: military units; tanks and titles; theatres of war; and names of ships, aircraft and weaponry.

A few things we learned:

1. Space and time are big issues in indexing military history as it is a dense subject. Confirm with the publisher/author whether they want ranks and titles to be included in the index. Decide on your structure as early as possible and don't get caught up in detail (e.g. does every battleship really need to be included, or is just a passing mention?)
2. If you are required to include ranks, be consistent with the text regarding people's ranks (index according to the highest rank obtained in the text). Cross-reference if an individual was in more than one armed service, and that they are sometimes seconded into the forces of other nations.
3. Regarding ranks, there are a range of abbreviation styles and these have changed over time. The current abbreviations used by the Australian defence Force are given in all caps (e.g. General = GEN.) However, you will rarely see this in a military history publication. If you are required to include ranks, follow the abbreviation style that is used in the text. If conflicting styles are used, seek clarification from the editor/author on which is the preferred style. File by the person's name and initials, not their rank: e.g. 'Hamilton, Maj Gen I.K.' will come before 'Hamilton, Gen J.G.'
4. Just to make things difficult, individual ships can share the same name. You may need to add qualifiers to distinguish a number of different HMAS *Sydneys* or *Canberras*. This can be done using dates of commission or type of craft (e.g. cruiser, destroyer, aircraft carrier, etc.) Indexing the names of aircraft, and grouping them correctly, can be particularly confusing, with some identified by the name of the manufacturer, others only the model name, and others simply by model numbers.
5. Indexing theatres of war or battles also needs care. Several battles over a period of time may have taken place in the one area (index them with date); a battle may be known by different names, depending on the nationalities involved.
6. Care needs to be taken in determining the best method of indexing armed forces units for any particular book; it can be hard to distinguish unit numbers and locators in a run-on index; it can also be complicated by inconsistent references to units in the text (e.g. 1 Div; First Division, or Division 1).

The ANZSI website contains information on specialist indexes but military history is not one of them. Back copies of *The Indexer* reveal only three articles:

- Cooke, Peter, 'For clarity's sake: indexing military works,' *The Indexer*, 2014, 32(3):94–97
- Forder, Michael, 'Military indexing: men and machines,' *The Indexer*, 2011, 29(3):CP7:1
- Millis, Kendra H., 'Ready, aim, fire: indexing military history,' *The Indexer*, 2018, 36(2):55–58

The Melbourne Indexers library also contains:

- Patton, Deborah, Indexing naval and other military books, in *Index it right! Advice from the expert*, vol.2, Medford, NJ, Information Today, 2010, pp. 77–83.

The take-away we gained from this session – as with any index, who’s going to read it and how will they find what they want? As there is no definitive guideline, just remember the golden rule of indexing: whichever indexing strategy you choose, or are asked to follow, be consistent!

Susan Pierotti

National Indexing Day 2019

National Indexing Day is on Thursday 28 March. Celebrate the day by meeting with your fellow indexers at ACMI Café, Federation Square (<http://fedsquare.com/eatdrink/acmi-cafe-bar>) from 10.30 am to 12.00 pm.

National Indexing Day is not just about keeping the fun to ourselves, so we’ll be promoting indexing by releasing a terrific book (with an equally terrific index of course!) through the World’s Library – BookCrossing (<https://www.bookcrossing.com/>). Our book will carry a unique BCID, along with indexing-related information, and its release at The Nook (<http://fedsquare.com/news/the-nook-fed-squares-newest-pop-up-venue>) will be visible to the whole world. Its serendipitous discovery is sure to make some lucky stranger’s day, and if they hop onto the site to log their catch, they’ll make our day too!

It would be good to have some idea of the number attending, so please drop us a line at melbourneindexers@gmail.com if you are going to join us.

Thema version 1.3

Thema, a relatively new global subject classification system for books, is intended for use by all aspects of the book business including publishers, retailers and public libraries. According to EDItEUR, the international group coordinating development of the standards infrastructure for electronic commerce in the book, e-book and serials sectors, *Thema* is being widely adopted.

Full details of its recent update can be found at <https://www.editeur.org/151/Thema/>

Upcoming meetings

Day: First Thursday of the month

Venue: Peppercorn Room, Level 1, 584 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn

Time: 6.00 – 8.00 pm

Carparking is available down the side of the building. If you are travelling by public transport there is a tram stop nearby, and Glenferrie Station is just a couple of tram stops away.

After the meeting we will go to a local restaurant for a meal (at own expense). For those travelling by public transport, there is always plenty of space in members’ cars to enable us to all get to the restaurant quickly. You will also be well located for getting home afterwards, with the train station and tram stops just a short walk away.

March 7	Indexing music biographies <i>Susan Pierotti</i>	Indexing biographies can be tricky – indexing biographies connected with Classical music can be trickier! If the readers are musicians, they will
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		be looking for information on symphonies, piano trios, Middle Period style and so on. This doesn't fit conveniently under a chronological arrangement nor a name/event one. Susan Pierotti will bring some Classical music books with a variety of indexing styles for us to discuss. Feel free to bring along any books on music and composers that you may have.
March 28	National Indexing Day	See page 3 for details.
April 4	Typesetting <i>Guest speaker Sonya Murphy</i>	Typesetters play an important role in book design and production. Sonya Murphy will talk about the history of the industry in Australia. How it transferred from a male-dominated hot-metal trade to today's technology. Explaining how books are designed, she will discuss how the font use, size, number of pages, etc are all determined.
May 2	Indexing Statutes <i>Karen Gillen</i>	The focus of this session will be on legislation (both domestic and foreign statutes) and other legal instruments such as statutory instruments, international agreements, and international treaties or covenants. Precursory matters such as parliamentary bills and explanatory memoranda will also be covered. There will be an overview of how each of these is presented in the indexes to both non-legal and legal texts. This will include filing and presentation in Tables of Statutes, and tips for embedded indexing. Come along armed with a willingness to learn some new skills or share your experience.
June 6	Annual report indexes <i>Max McMaster & Mary Russell</i>	Having examined all 186 Commonwealth annual reports for 2016/17, what can we learn about the quality of their indexes? How do they vary? What is the layout of their indexes like? Is it possible to suggest ways the indexes could be improved?
July	10-year celebrations	Details coming soon.

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

Correction

Oops! We were a little ahead of ourselves with last month's *Bulletin*. It should have been put out as the January issue, not the February issue.