

Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

2009 – Celebrating 10 years of Melbourne Indexers – 2019

No. 40, February 2019

In this issue

- December meeting: Indexing handwritten journals	1
- Upcoming meetings	6

December meeting: Indexing handwritten journals

Even in this technology age handwritten journals are popular. Indexing handwritten journals is not new. One method used for indexing commonplace books was developed by John Locke in 1687. This is explained by Alan Walker in his article in *The Indexer*. Exploring modern tips for handwriting journals, I was surprised how often they refer to compiling an index or visual tagging. Are there tips here for indexers?

Handwritten journals have all sorts of names including workbooks, notebooks, sketch books, field notes, commonplace books, idea books, bullet journals, research books or log books. Many of these names imply specific features or uses. For ease I'm using 'journals' as an umbrella term for all these types. When writing a journal, you tend to focus on a particular thing and record what has happened or plan for the future. Some uses might be:

- Record what you learnt from an indexing job.
- Notes taken while attending a conference.
- Record process steps and results, e.g. obtaining dyes from plants.
- Sketches done during a visit to place or gallery.
- Lists of books you want to read or details of those read.
- Tasks you need to do. Perhaps preparing for an event or holiday.
- Collection of ideas for decorating house or future craft project.
- Reminders of regular tasks such as seasonal gardening jobs.
- Keep track of progress and ticking tasks off when completed, such as marking off the days you go for a walk or recording alcohol free days.
- Notes for future books or poems.

The advantage of not being digital is it is easier to jot something down while you are undertaking a process, you can keep everything in one place and the layout can be more visual.

The session looked at features of modern notebooks, indexing advice given and then examined some published handwritten journals.

Marking the fore-edge

Delfonics produce 'Table of contents' notebooks. It is a dot grid notebook with the numbers one to ten printed down the fore-edge side of each page. Inside the front cover is the table of contents where you allocate a topic to each of the ten numbers. Let us pretend you are using the notebook to keep jottings about the next fiction book you are writing. You may decide notes on settings are given the number one, two refers to characters, three is sample dialogue, etc. As you write in the notebook you circle the appropriate number at the fore-edge. As you flip the pages of the notebook you can quickly see which pages the notes on characters can be found.

Bullet journals

Bullet journals (or Bujos) were started by Ryder Carroll (<https://bulletjournal.com/>). They are notebooks with specific additional features: dot grid pages, rather than ruled lines, the pages are all numbered, there are pages for an index at the front, pages for future log (like a calendar) and list of suggested symbols to use to mark tasks as they are completed or ongoing. Step one in a quick reference guide is to create an index (<https://www.tinyrayofsunshine.com/blog/bullet-journal-reference-guide>)!

- Title first 4 pages index
- When you add a new entry, index it
- This is a snapshot of what's in your bullet journal
- Pro tip: only index what you'll reference later

Threading

Threading is a technique suggested for those using bullet journals. You start writing something on page 5 for instance, let's say a list of chores you want to do over summer. You add to the list as you think of things. By the time that page is full you are up to say page 90 in the journal, having filled the other pages with other material. You continue your summer chores list on page 90. The idea is you 'thread' these topics together:

- By the page number on page 5 you add |90 (notation becomes 5|90) to indicate topic continues on page 90
- Similarly on page 90 you have 90|5

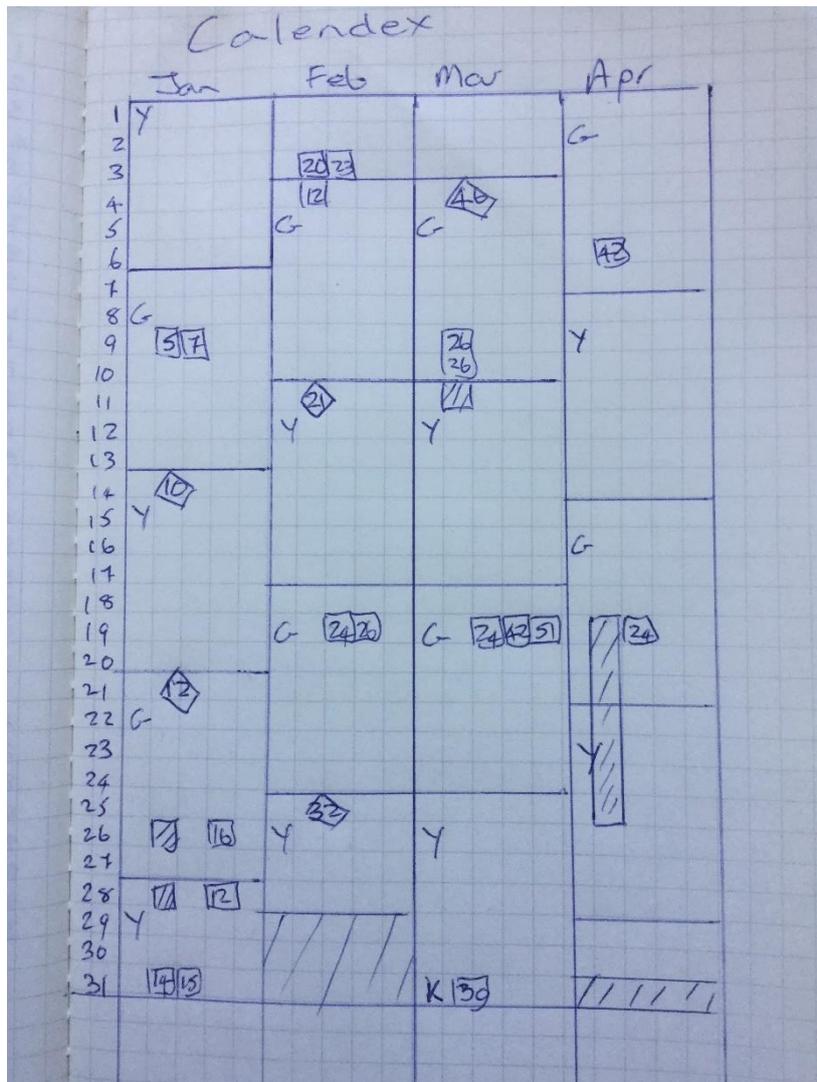
This saves you always looking for 'summer chores' in the index.

As you finish journals and start to want to refer to pages in previous journals you move on to 'notebook threading'. The notation used to refer to page 75 in journal number 6 is 6.75. Further details available at <https://www.tinyrayofsunshine.com/blog/threading-types>

Calendex

A calendex is a hybrid of a calendar and an index developed by Eddy Hope (<https://bulletjournal.com/blogs/bulletjournalist/calendex> or <http://thecalendex.com/>). Let's assume you use a specific journal when you attend meetings to take notes or minutes. Between the meetings you use the journal to make notes on preparation required for specific events, jot down things you need to follow up on or list tasks required by a specific date. A calendex is an alternative way to index the journal. Instead of indexing the content you index the dates. To do this draw up a

calendar and add page numbers beside the dates. Colour could be used to indicate a specific type of event. You may also add letters or dots to indicate regular due dates for tasks.



Calendex example (Mary Russell)

Field notes

Field notes tend to have a more scientific focus. Michael Cranfield's book explains their history, how they differ from sketchbooks and offers guidelines on how they should be kept including instructions on how to index them:

You create an index after (or during) a field session. In an index, you can indicate where in your field notebook you can find information on specific experiments (you may be running several experiments in parallel, and information on them may be interleaved in your notebook), specific species of interest, and specific habitats or locations. A good index takes some time to compile, but it quickly repays itself by making it very easy for you to locate specific information later. (Greene, p.268)

Examples given include one of an index prepared for a field guide on birds. To prevent references to birds being missed it adds a star (*) to page numbers where a bird is mentioned more than once on the page.

Encouraging habits to assist indexing

These few examples highlight how creating an index to your journal is being encouraged. This is index creation on the run, rather than when you have filled the journal. Journal writers are encouraged to number their pages and to think about linking the contents so they can easily find the page required. This is more advanced than creating a contents page or using a page marking ribbon or sticky flags to mark pages. A quick search on 'bullet journals' will give you an idea of how widely indexing, threading, calendex and other tagging methods are being used.

Published examples

Handwritten journals are everywhere. Some are family treasures and passed down in families, others make their way to library or archive collections as important historical documents. The value of sketchbooks is recognised by the Sketchbook Project at the Brooklyn Art Library as they actively collect and catalogue sketchbooks (<https://www.sketchbookproject.com/>).

Sometimes a dedicated person deciphers the handwriting and types up the contents. Are handwritten journals published? What form do they take? Having explored how individuals may index their own journals, do these published versions have indexes? I decided to explore the options available at my local libraries.

Published in full

I found a few examples where the journal was published in full. Elizabeth Smither's commonplace book is 'a collection of miscellaneous quotations, extracts, pensées, interspersed with suppositions, incidents, memories springing *from* the entries themselves is something I have always loved.' Murray Bail's covers notes from the novelist's time in London and Sydney. Includes observations, conversations and musings. Most are only a paragraph and separated by a couple of blank lines. The notebooks of Henrick Drescher and Bruno Lett are more visual being full of paintings, drawings and collages, sometime with text. All these journals were not indexed. Those by Smither and Bail would certainly have benefited from having an added index.

Collections

The fascination with sketchbooks has resulted in books exploring specific types. The book by Lewis-Jones is a glimpse into 70 sketchbooks by explorers. Bynum explore botanical sketchbooks in a similar way. Both these books have indexes.

Julia Rothman's book provides a peek into the work of 44 artists, illustrators, graphic designers and cartoonists. She also interviewed the artists about their techniques and how they use sketchbooks.

Annotated journals

Gregory Eccleston has closely examined the notebooks of Granville Stapylton. These have been reproduced in full, with extensive annotations and additional material to assist the reader. It has a detailed index.

Betty Churcher has published the sketchbooks she produced while visiting galleries with background information and additional explanatory notes. These include an index.

John Curran examined Agatha Christie's notebooks to gain insight into the inspiration for her books. It has a detailed index.

Indexing challenges

As seen with the close examination of the notebooks by Stapylton and Christie, there is an interest in examining the contents of someone's handwritten journals. In both cases the collection of journals was not sequential. One journal was put down or lost for a time and another journal used, then writing continued in the previous journal. This adds to the challenges facing anyone studying the journals and indexing them. With this in mind I can see how some of the modern on-the-run type indexing tips, such as calendex would assist anyone indexing a handwritten journal.

Mary Russell

References

- Bail, Murray, *Notebooks 1970–2003*. London, Harvill Press 2005.
- Bynum, Helen and William. *Botanical sketchbooks*. London, Thames & Hudson, 2017.
- Canfield, Michael. *Field notes on science and nature*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Carroll, Ryder, *The bullet journal method*. London, 4th Estate, 2018.
- Churcher, Betty. *Australian notebooks*. Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- Churcher, Betty. *Forgotten notebook*. Carlton, Miegunyah Press, 2015
- Churcher, Betty. *Notebooks*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2011
- Curran, John. *Agatha Christie's secret notebooks: fifty years in the making*. London Harper Collins, 2009.
- Drescher, Henrik. *China days: a visual journal from China's wild west*. San Francisco, Chronical Books, 2014.
- Eccleston, Gregory C. *Granville Stapylton: Australia Felix 1836, second in command to Major Mitchell*. Melbourne, Evandale Publishing, 2018
- Greene, Erick, 'Why keep a field notebook?' in Canfield, Michael ed, *Field notes on science and nature*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2011, p251-274
- Lewis-Jones, Huw and Herbert, Kari. *Explorers' sketchbooks: the art of discovery and adventure*, Farnborough, Thames and Hudson, 2016
- Rothman, Julia. *Drawn in: a peek into the inspiring sketchbooks of 44 fine artists, illustrators, graphic designers and cartoonists*. Beverly, Mass. Quarry Books, 2011.
- Smither, Elizabeth. *The Commonplace book: a writer's journey through quotations*, Auckland University Press, 2011
- Walker, Alan. 'Indexing commonplace books: John Locke's method', *The Indexer*, 22(3):114–118, 2001.

Save the date!

Thursday 28 March is National Indexing Day

Upcoming meetings

Day: First Thursday of the month

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

Time: 6.00 – 8.00 pm

Please note the change in meeting room for 2019.

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.

February 7	Indexing military and wartime history <i>Karen Gillen</i>	<p>In recent times there has been a resurgence of interest in the history and commemoration of twentieth-century wars and those who served in them, especially in the lead-up to the 100th anniversaries of the Gallipoli campaign and the ending of World War I. This interest has been accompanied by the publication of numerous books on wartime and military history ranging from biographies of major military figures, detailed analyses of military strategy, reports of archaeological digs on battlefields, to battlefield tourism guidebooks. There have also been many publications on the actions of the military in more contemporary conflicts and peacekeeping missions.</p> <p>In this session we will explore, as a group, how military history is indexed in such works. In particular, we'll be considering such questions as How are defence forces and military units arranged in the index? Are ranks added to the names of people? How do you index battles, campaigns, and locations? How do you index ordnance (i.e. military materiel)?</p> <p>Spend some time browsing indexes to wartime and military histories and bring something to share to the session.</p>
March 7	Indexing music biographies <i>Susan Pierotti</i>	<p>Indexing biographies can be tricky – indexing biographies connected with Classical music can be trickier! If the readers are musicians, they will be looking for information on symphonies, piano</p>

		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.
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