

Melbourne Indexers Bulletin

2009 – Celebrating 10 years of Melbourne Indexers – 2019

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March meeting: Indexing books on Classical music

The Melbourne Indexers met on 7 March to study the tricky problems associated with indexing books on Classical music. Being a former full-time violinist, I brought several tomes from my personal library to illustrate what readers can expect when they search for information.

Indexers were given a piece of music and three back-of-book indexes. I asked them to pretend that they were a musician with the task of saying something about the piece to an audience. Those indexers who have been musically trained found the relevant indexed listings within a minute, the others found it difficult. All the required information was on the page of music (and one didn't have to read music to find it) but the indexes themselves were unclear.

Classical music pieces can be classified by genre (in the example given, a string quartet), catalogue numbering (e.g. Mozart has K. numbers, Bach has BWV numbers), what key it is in and when it was written. In a book on string quartets, a musician would search under key or numbering, whereas a scholar might expect a chronological listing. To index a Classical music text, you would need to know who's reading the book.

The age of the publication plays a part in how the index is compiled. One book from the 1950s listed 'Quartets of Strings', a heading that every musician in the room found highly unusual!

Composers as prolific as Percy Grainger present an interesting conundrum. Musicians have a mental hierarchy of works: original, arrangements and transcriptions, journal articles and books, in that order. Penelope Thwaites' *The New Percy Grainger Companion* (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2010) was indexed in just this way under a main heading of 'Percy Grainger' and subheadings of original works, arrangements and transcriptions etc.

The index, however, contained a number of curious entries, such as 'English Folk Dance and Song Society; see English Folk-Song Society', followed immediately by 'English Folk-Song Society' with its locator – why, one wonders...? Under the heading 'Melbourne' were listed entities such as the Albert Street Conservatorium, the Centennial Exhibition, the Masonic Hall and the Philharmonic Society; and 'University 123, 143; Baillieu Library 150' were listed as one entry! Perhaps the indexer

was tired or running out of time, but collecting all things Melburnian in one lump isn't helpful for the reader.

Cross-references would have been handy in John Lucas' *Thomas Beecham: An obsession with music* (The Boydell Press, Woodridge, 2008). Beecham was a well known opera conductor but if you want to look up the name of an opera, you will only find it under the name of the composer; there is no index reference to 'opera' or to their individual names.

I also passed around two books on the composer, Handel, and asked everyone to find an indexed reference to his opera, *Julius Caesar*. It took a while to find the heading in both books as they were indexed as '*Giulio Cesare*'! Though opera at the time was always sung in Italian, Handel spent the large majority of his working life in England and the books were written in English for an English-speaking audience – a case, perhaps, of the indexer being accurate rather than intuitive?

A number of books I used as illustrations were from the same publisher; there was some discussion that the indexers of these may have been given a style guide that was less than satisfactory regarding the needs of the reader, being basically author/date indexes with no cross-references and long strings of locators. (Yet this publisher is regarded as scholarly in the Classical music world!)

The best index overall was quirky (dates given in index of every person mentioned, even if only in captions) but consistent, and we were pleased to see his name printed proudly above the index as a member of the Society of Indexers (UK). Yet, even there, there was a bibliography that repeated information in the index – did the author write one and the indexer another?

The conclusion was that none of these books had a good quality index that assisted either a musician, a scholar or a member of the general public to find quickly and easily what they would be looking for. It may be a perennial problem as the March 2019 issue of *The Indexer* contains an article titled 'The challenges of indexing books on music.' I couldn't agree more!

Susan Pierotti

Unusual indexes

Index on the cover!



Sydney School: formative moments in architecture, design and planning at the University of Sydney (by Lee Stickells and Andrew Leach and published by Uro Publications, Melbourne, 2018) wears its index on its covers. While there are a couple of blank pages at the back of the book, there is no index there. The index is used as the graphic to cover the book. Printed sideways in four columns, the index is predominately a name index with no subheadings. There is no indentation and the columns are left justified. Does it work? Yes. It changes the experience of looking something up in the index. Seeing a name on the cover, you are more likely to flip to the appropriate pages. It is easier to return to the cover to find the next page to look up or to look for another name.

Royal family official engagements

For 40-years Tim O'Donovan has been tabulating the royal family official engagements from the *Court Circular*. *The Sunday Age* 10 March 2019 reproduced an article on his work from the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/world/europe/uk-royal-family-workload.html>).

Surprisingly there is no official annual tally of royal engagements. While he argues his annual summary isn't a 'league table' it certainly highlights how busy the royals are. Fancy going to 119 receptions, lunches, dinners and banquets in a year? The Princess Royal did in 2017. The summary for 2017 indicates he has three main groupings for engagements; official visits, receptions and other engagements, including investitures. He also notes if the engagement was in the UK or overseas. Here is his summary for 2017 in *The Times* with comments

<https://whorunsbritain.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/2018/01/13/mr-odonovans-annual-survey-of-royal-engagements/>

Mary Russell

Chinese censorship and Australian publishing

Recently the *Sydney Morning Herald* took a look at Chinese government censorship and the impact it is having on Australian books being printed in that country.

In particular, this interesting article considers the long list of restrictions that publishers have to comply with, as well as the dilemma they find themselves in with economics effectively eliminating the option of printing in countries with freer environments.

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/chinese-government-censors-ruling-lines-through-australian-books-20190222-p50zpn.html>

2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages

With the release of the Australian Government's Action Plan for the IY2019, we've got our eyes open for what impact this might have on indexing.

https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/iyil_2019_action_plan.pdf

Might it result in new resources that provide guidance on appropriate and inappropriate terminology in the Australian setting? There is certainly room for something like the Canadian *Elements of Indigenous Style* that includes preferred terminology, and explains terms they consider inappropriate such as artifact, land claims and self-government.

If you see anything of interest, we'd love to hear from you.

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

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.

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.