American Society of Indexers

The Annual General Meeting of the American Society of Indexers was held on 7th May, 1971, in New York City. At this meeting the following officers and directors of the society were elected:

President: Mr. John Fall.
Vice-President: Mrs. Barbara Preschel.
Treasurer: Mr. Philip Deemer.
Secretary: Mrs. Marlene Hurst.
Corresponding Secretary: Mr. Alan Greengrass.

Directors (for term expiring in 1974):
Dr. Charles Bernier.
Mrs. Anne J. Richter.

Mr. John Fall is Chairman of the Public Affairs Information Service. (This is the publisher of the PAIS Bulletin and the PAIS foreign language index.) From 1935 to 1967 he was a librarian with the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, holding the positions of Assistant in the Director’s Office, Chief of the Acquisition Division, and Chief of the Economics Division. Mr. Fall has been active in the American Library Association and in the New York Library Association.

The Nominating Committee this year consisted of Miss Jane Stevens, chairman; Mrs. R. H. Hines, and Mrs. Nelda Cassuto.

Mrs. Steiner-Prag, the retiring President, announced that the Guideline on employment terms for freelance indexers and the Guideline for publishers and editors on index evaluation were completed and were to be published and distributed. Mr. Greengrass reported that his committee was developing a guideline for index pricing and fees. He asked that any suggestions in this area be sent to him.

Mr. Robert J. Palmer, who has been serving as the society’s representative to the Society of Indexers, reported that committees of the two societies had reached an agreement on the terms of the proposed affiliation of the societies. Mr. Palmer read the proposed agreement in full to the members present, who approved it unanimously and sent it back to the Society of Indexers for approval by their membership.

Mrs. Steiner-Prag announced that incorporation documents had been completed and that no difficulties concerning their acceptance by New York State was to be expected.

The treasurer’s report showed that the bank balance of the society was $1,940.32.

The guest speaker of the evening was Dr. Michael P. Barnett, Director of Research and Development at the H. W. Wilson Company. He spoke on ‘The computer, reality, and indexing’, discussing computer applications for indexing and typesetting.

After the election results were made known by the tellers who had been counting the ballots, the new President, Mr. Fall, took over the chair. A motion was then made and carried to thank Mrs. Steiner-Prag for her work as President of the Society.

The Register of the Society of Indexers

The Society’s Panel of Indexers, from which the Register evolved, operated until 1968. Up to that time a person desirous of being admitted to the Panel indicated this when completing the form of application for membership of the Society. But if this was not done at the time of joining, a request in writing could be made to the Hon. Secretary later.

The applicant then submitted a complete list of books, periodicals or documents, etc., indexed, stating their titles, names of publishers and dates of publication. To avoid any sort of unfairness in admitting members to the Panel it was a standard requirement
for every applicant to provide evidence in the form of books or other work for examination by one (or in doubtful cases more) of the members of the Council who formed the Panel Committee. If however an applicant had compiled indexes to business records or archives which could not be made available to the public, then full details of experience of the applicant was submitted together with names of previous employers. In this second situation the first of any published indexes had to be submitted for examination, although the member had been admitted to the Panel.

The Hon. Secretary maintained a record of the Panel in the form of edge-punched cards, one for each member. Each card contained as many as twenty particulars including such items as subject preference, qualifications, occupation, type of indexing done, proficiency in languages. Details of each recommendation made as a result of the Panel service were also added.

As the Panel contained the names of experienced indexers only, the aspiring indexer was offered probationary admission to the Panel until such time as a published index which reached the required standard was submitted. The names of probationary indexers were included with those of Panel members when submitting names to publishers needing recommendations, but their lack of experience was pointed out. This practice was based on the assumption that good publishers recognized that in order to provide a continual supply of proficient indexers, newcomers would have to be given an opportunity to get started.

The Panel worked well for the growing Society and provided a strong nucleus of competent indexers. But it became obvious that a more watertight structure was necessary if the Society was going to ensure an expanding well-equipped band of indexers.

After much discussion a resolution was passed at the 1967 A.G.M. of the Society requesting the preparation of a scheme to be submitted to the A.G.M. in 1968. Following this, a Special General Meeting of the Society which was held on 3rd October, 1968, amended the Constitution to allow for the provision of a Register of Indexers. All the members who had previously been on the Society’s Panel were automatically entitled to call themselves ‘Registered Indexers of the Society of Indexers’ as long as they remained members of the Society. As the ‘probationer’ grade ceased to exist, probationers were urged to apply for or be recommended for Registration in accordance with the Rules for the maintenance and administration of the Register of Indexers.

At the 1969 A.G.M. a Board of Assessors consisting of seven members of the Society, themselves qualified as Registered Indexers and appointing a chairman from among their number, was set up. The Board considers applications and recommendations for inclusion on the Register, and after satisfying itself as to the competence of the applicant, the designation Registered Indexer is conferred and may be used as long as the indexer remains a member of the Society.

Competence of the applicant as an indexer is judged from examples of indexes submitted, either published or supplied to a book without an index as an exercise. Past work, academic or professional qualifications and status and other relevant matters are taken into account. Unsuccessful candidates may reapply or again be recommended for consideration for inclusion in the Register at any time after the expiration of six months from the date of the previous application or recommendation. In addition, the Board has power to include in the Register the names of persons distinguished in the field of indexing.

Registered Indexers indicate the fields in which they work or specialise, and these are recorded for submission to publishers and authors on request. It is usual to submit four names when an index is requested for a work. The nature of the work, be it legal, economic, one of the sciences or humanities, is taken into account and names supplied are according to the specialities recorded against the name of each Registered Indexer. Thus in a given year, if there is a large number of
requests for legal indexers, the few who have specialised in this type of work can expect a larger volume of work than the indexer who has only given, say, one rare subject as the field in which he is interested in compiling indexes. An initial introduction from the Register to a publisher may, of course, result in further work being forthcoming to that indexer from the same publisher, and possibly no further requests coming to the Register from that source.

Since its inception three and a half years ago, the hundred plus indexers on the Register, who between them can offer experience in providing indexes for books and periodicals across the whole spectrum of knowledge, have received nearly 300 applications for indexes from authors and publishers. Nearly 1,000 names from the Register have been submitted to comply with these requests. Effort is made to spread these requests amongst indexers, but obviously some names will be given oftener than others because of the demand for certain subject specialities.

The Council has also prepared for the guidance of members a leaflet on fees for indexing which recommends payment ‘by the hour’ as the most practical method of assessing payment and has revised the fees in accordance with today’s costs. E.J.W.

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**OUR CONTRIBUTORS**

**Mr. M. Z. Barkai** is the Society’s Corresponding Member for Israel.

**Michael Belton** is Librarian of the Safety in Mines Research Establishment; prior to this he was Deputy Librarian of Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham and had previous experience with Worcestershire County Libraries and Birmingham Public Libraries.

**Mr. F. D. O. Beuttler** is a customer support specialist, microform systems, in one of the worldwide manufacturers of such materials.

**Mr. G. H. Burns** has experience of information filing gained over 30 years while working, inter alia, as a laboratory assistant, in a medical office and in an engineering services department. He is now a General Manager’s Clerical Officer in a large undertaking.

**Mr. R. L. Collison**, a Vice-President of the Society, is Research Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles.

**Miss R. D. Coole**, a Vice-President of the Society, has had considerable experience in publishing as well as book indexing.

**Mr. H. Godfrey Green**, the Society’s Corresponding Member in Australia, is a research journalist and indexer of general and legal books.

**Mr. Bruce S. C. Harling**. See Vol. 7, p. 131.

**Mr. A. R. Hewitt**, a Vice-President of the Society, has specialised, and lectured on, legal indexing; was Chairman of the Editorial Board for a number of years.


**Dr. J. E. Holmstrom**, a writer and indexer in the field of science, has lectured on periodical indexing in the Society’s training courses.

**Reginald Frank Kennedy**, formerly City Librarian of the Johannesburg Public Library. He recently wrote, and compiled a full index to, *The heart of a city: a history of the Johannesburg Public Library*, and says that the index is the best part of the book.

**Mr. I. Shamah**. See Vol. 7, p. 30.

**Mr. F. H. C. Tatham** is a member of Council and Chairman of the Board of Assessors.

**Mr. John L. Thornton** was Hon. Editor of *The Indexer* (1959-1963), and for many years the representative of the Library Association on the Council of the Society of which he is now a Vice-President.

**Mrs. E. J. Wallis** is the Assistant Editor of *The Indexer* and maintains the Society’s Register of Indexers.