Miss P. M. Trew, who has been Hon. Secretary of the Society since early 1970, has resigned; her successor, who has already taken over his duties, is Mr. W. A. Menzies, ACIS, ATII, of The Old Inn, Keere Street, Lewes, Sussex.

The Annual General Meeting is to be held at the offices of the Library Association at 6 p.m. on Thursday, 23rd May. Following this, Dr. Theodore D. N. Bestermann, the distinguished bibliographer who was compiler of A world bibliography of bibliographies, will give an address.

Personalia

Mrs. Magda Whitrow is the executive editor of the ISIS cumulative bibliography, the first two volumes of which were published in 1972; the publication of the remaining two volumes is well in hand. This bibliography of the history of science is based on the Isis critical bibliographies, 1913-65, and has been supported by grants from the United States Steel Foundation, the National Science Foundation (U.S.A.), the History of Science Society (U.S.A.), and scholars and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic have generously contributed both help and facilities. The publisher is Mansell.

Miss Kathleen Sinclair. We are very sorry to record the passing early in March of Miss Kathleen Sinclair after a short illness. She was a high-powered chemist, who had worked for I.C.I. and Shell and was for nearly twenty years a sub-editor of scientific articles for Chambers’s encyclopedia; lately she had worked for the Dutch publishers of Wear a journal concerned with the chemistry and physics of friction. A freelance indexer of scientific books and journals for many years, Miss Sinclair’s kindly and charming personality will be missed at meetings of the Society of which she had been a member for a long time. She had supported the activities and the aims of the Society, quietly but constantly and the Council had acknowledged this at its last meeting, by conferring upon her the distinction of becoming an Honorary Vice-President.

We understand that the statement on p.230 of The indexer for October, 1973 that Margaret R. Hunton has ‘edited’ books published by Knopf, Simon & Schuster and Pyramid, should have been ‘indexed’.

A member writes:

“Indexers will not be replaced by Computers”

Thus Mr. Keith W. Wright in The indexer for October 1973, at page 16. On which I fervently comment “Not for me, they won’t”. And here is why.

I recently accepted an invitation to an I.B.M. —House of Commons Library demonstration in one of the smaller halls of the House itself. We were told that the demonstration was designed to show how the latest computer techniques could (inter alia) help to render the “ever-increasing flow of legislation” more manageable and make it easier to pinpoint which documents or parts of documents are relevant to a particular topic; also, to store the full text of documents and so reduce time spent in the manual indexing of legislation.

The texts chosen for the demonstration were taken from two groups—Parliamentary Questions, with which I am not concerned, and Statutes in force, published by Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, with which I am.

The computer equipment used in the demonstration included visual display units, which were the “terminals” for “conversing” with the computer. The words or phrases to be searched for were typed on a keyboard and almost simultaneously displayed on a screen for checking; then the computer response was displayed on the screen, all at about 250 characters per second. The Statutes in force volumes available covered the subjects Agriculture and Compulsory Acquisition.

I was invited to put an indexing question to the computer, so I asked where in the Agriculture Acts there was mention of the Pig Industry Development Association (P.I.D.A. for short). The demonstrator played a series of keys of what looked like a conventional typewriter keyboard and my question came up on the screen, accurately. The demonstrator indicated his approval; the computer hummed and ha’d to itself for a moment or two; then upon the screen
appeared something like the following (the figures are imaginary):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A ‘document’ for this purpose is a section of an Act.

But as to the four words in conjunction, the computer came up with a NIL return. The demonstrator and his assistants gave me a shrewd look, as though to say “You are not trying to catch the computer out, are you?” I protested that I was not; I knew that the P.I.D.A. (in full) was mentioned at least once somewhere in the Agriculture Acts. To back my assertion, I reached for the index covering the group of Agriculture Acts, and behold, under “Livestock” I found:

Pig Industry Development Authority, dissolution of, 1967 c.22 s.22 (i.e., section 22 of the Agriculture Act 1967).

“Authority”, not “Association”, you see: my mistake. But the computer had been unable to correct me; yet a glance at the manually compiled index had put me right and given me the answer to my question in a twinkling. Until computers can do that among their many tricks, they will not replace indexers.

Correspondence

Hindsight

Dear Sir,

At the beginning of 1973 I undertook, after a meeting with the Managing Director, to index a twenty-volume work. The agreement on terms and price was verbal only. The proofs were to arrive volume by volume at fairly regular intervals and index-copy was to be ready for the printers before the end of May. In the event only about half the volumes were ready for me by May and the usual rush ensued as proofs flooded in during June and July. Indexing was in fact completed by the beginning of August.

I had been warned earlier that these publishers were slow payers, and about five weeks after submitting my final account I thought it wise to start chasing my fee. I had arranged to have progress payments and, in fairness to the publishers, I must say that one small account I did send was settled, but with the rush of work in the later stages I did not submit another account until the end.

There was another reason for anxiety; on a visit to the office with index cards I had heard that some pay cheques had bounced, but this had been put right and the staff treated it as a joke. With hindsight I should have paid more attention to this incident, as the next news I had was that the Receiver had been called in. I had to prepare myself to wave good-bye to my substantial fee—but not without a fight.

After several telephone calls when the only information gleaned was that no one responsible was available, I was told that a foreign firm who had been in partnership in this particular enterprise had, to protect their own interests, taken over entire responsibility for the work and would therefore be paying contributors—none of whom had apparently been paid. At the same time I received a letter from the Receiver asking for details of my claims. The Receiver told me on the telephone that he had heard of this intended settlement of the encyclopaedia accounts but clearly disapproved of this as being most unorthodox. For about three weeks I did not know whether or not I would be paid for one of the longest jobs I had ever done. I did, however, receive my fee on the grounds that they could not proceed with publication of the work unless they paid me for my copyright, and I signed a contract giving them world rights. (I was told rather grandiosely that the work was to be published simultaneously around the world).

For me there were lessons to be learnt from this experience. Where the firm you are dealing with is small or new, and especially where the job to be done is larger than usual, then it is worthwhile taking extra care, however irksome it may appear at the time. Where progress payments can be arranged for a large index, this gives an extra safeguard. A publisher would realise that any refusal to pay at this stage should mean that the index would not arrive. Even though it is common practice to cede copyright on indexes, the fact that copyright is ours until payment is received must be a strong legal argument in a case where publishers do not pay, for whatever reason. In the event, I was fortunate...