NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

We give a welcome to J. Ainsworth Gordon, B.A., the new Honorary Secretary of the Society.

We are pleased to report that Miss Mary Piggott, B.A., F.L.A., and Mr. Philip E. Found, a founder-member of the Society, have accepted invitations to serve on the Council.

Persons living in Australia who wish to join the Society may obtain particulars and membership forms through the Hon. Secretary of our Australian branch, the Society of Indexers in Australia, Mr. H. Godfrey Green, 35 Rosedale Road, Glen Iris, Victoria 3146, Australia. To do so will save both time and postages.

The Council is grateful to the members who completed the questionnaire on meetings. Based on a summary of the replies, plans are being made for a whole-day meeting in the spring of 1976.

A member wrote to the Society saying that she had agreed verbally with a publisher to compile an index to a book, but that when it was partly completed, the publisher asked her not to complete it but return the proofs as publication had been deferred.

The matter was referred to the Society’s Hon. Solicitor who expressed the view that in the absence of a written contract setting out in full the mutual rights and obligations of the indexer and the publisher, it was impossible to say whether the publisher was in breach of his contract when they asked for the proofs to be returned to him. Unless the terms on which the indexer contracted were that the indexer should be paid a fixed sum, regardless of whether the publisher permitted her to complete the index, she was only entitled to receive a reasonable fee for the work which she did complete.

To avoid such situations occurring it would be necessary to enter into written contracts which made it clear that the publisher would be in breach of contract should he withdraw the work from the indexer without good cause.

In addition to the Hon. Solicitor’s view expressed above on this particular case, this happening will doubtless raise in readers’ minds other aspects which have arisen in this or in other cases.

Readers who have views to express on various points are invited to send them to the Hon. Secretary, or if for publication in The Indexer (anonymously if desired—providing the writer’s name is supplied for the Hon. Editor’s information) to the Hon. Editor.

Personalia

The second five-year Analytical index to the publications of the Institution of Civil Engineers has been compiled by Dr. J. Edwin Holmstrom and recently published. It has been compiled on the same principles as the earlier volume reviewed in The Indexer 7 (4) Autumn 1971 but this time has a place and project names index in addition to the author and subject indexes. To be published in November is another major index by Dr. Holmstrom. This is the index to the Proceedings of the British Academy; it covers the years 1903 (when the Academy’s activities began) until 1964.

Readers concerned with the indexing of periodicals may like to know that in the Journal of Documentation for June 1975 there is a fuller account by Dr. Holmstrom of the methods (the principles of which he dealt with in The Indexer 8 (1) 31-43) which he has progressively improved as a result of these two major indexing projects.

Readers will be interested to know that the book An index to the Waverley Novels by Philip Bradley, on which an article appeared in The Indexer in April 1973 under the title “A Long Fiction Index”, is in process of publication. The work was originally carried out as an M.A. thesis at the University of Strathclyde. The Scarecrow Press of Metuchen, New Jersey, is undertaking the production of the book which is expected to be available in the autumn.

F. T. Dunn has now completed his Cumulative and Analytical Index to the seventy volumes (1905-74) of The Dickensian. This is due for publication by the Harvester Press this autumn.
Professor Jessica L. Harris, the representative of the American Society of Indexers on the Editorial Board of this journal, gave an address on the “Terminology and Syndetic Structure for the Cumulative Index to the Annual Review of Information Science and Technology” at the International Study Institute of Printed Subject Indexes which was held at the School of Librarianship Wales in July.

We regret to have to record the death of Mr. F. D. Buck.

Correspondence

Dear Mr. Harrod,

Thank you for sending me the copy of The Indexer for April, in which I see you have quoted (p.127) from my review of Hendry’s book.

This prompts me to send you an extract of another review which has just appeared. (From FOCUS on international and comparative librarianship, 6(1) 1975, 9.


“... the book necessarily abounds in acronyms but unfortunately the list of acronyms and their meanings and the index, whether used separately or jointly, do not allow you to find what you want... of the 62 which are in the list, only 27 appear in the index, and to make matters more confusing some organisations are entered in the index under acronym, e.g. ICSU, and others under the full name. There are no entries under subjects... One only has to jot down the page references to say, abstracting, or indexing, while reading the book, to discover that the index entries are entirely inadequate.”

I also include an extract from my letter in the L.A. Record for January 1975, 16-17, on the coincidence that several books which I have reviewed all had faulty indexes. To make this more useful to anyone who might wish to turn up the originals I have added the citations.

Book indexes again

“... the appalling inadequacy of the index to the LA publication [Professional and non-

professional duties in libraries. 2nd ed. 1974]. The layout is bad, being unattractive, irregular and wasteful of space. In such a small index of four pages there are three errors of alphabetization. There is a typographical displacement at Education, and a number missing at the foot of p.83. There are numerous peculiarities of style of index entry, but worst of all there are many omissions, some of words used in the text; others, of reference numbers.

“It seems more than a coincidence that I have now collected a series of works written by librarians (who know what they should provide) for librarians (who know what to look for) in which the Fourth Law is so badly broken. There was the Five Years’ Work... [Letter in LA Record, Jan. 1969, 24]; Library and information science abstracts, 1969 [LA Record, Mar. 1971, 45-46]; LIST 1972 [Unesco Bull. for Libr., Mar.-Apr. 1973, 104-107]; the SLA News for 1973 [SLA News, Jan.-Feb. 1974, 17-19]; and now this booklet. All these works contain masses of ‘bits’ of information which needed to be indexed fully if the information was not to be ignored.”

Yours sincerely,
H. A. Whatley.

Dear Mr. Harrod,

We were very interested to see a copy of your magazine, and particularly the reference to ourselves on page 128.

I would like to make it absolutely clear that the book referred to, THE ELLIOTS, was published by ourselves on behalf of the Elliot family, and we had no control over the quality or content of the index whatsoever. Whilst not claiming to be perfect, we regard such an innuendo as casting a slur on our professionalism and would ask you to make this plain in a subsequent issue of your magazine. In our particular field of publishing nobody feels more than we the need to employ top-class professionals to avoid inaccuracies.

Whilst I think the criticism was justified, it should not have been laid at our door, although, of course, I understand why it was.

Yours sincerely,
Leo Cooper.

Seeley, Service & Cooper Ltd.

The passage complained of did not form part of an original review in The Indexer but was an excerpt from the TLS — Hon. Editor

The Indexer Vol. 9 No. 4 October 1975 179