

# INDEXING IN A STATE PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY\*

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Indexing is of paramount importance in a library serving legislators, as accurate information must be located quickly, often at times when other sources are not available. Thus we are concerned with compiling indexes for internal use and exploiting the printed indexes available, particularly those to periodicals and to legal and official publications.

In the Library of the Parliament of Victoria we maintain ready indexes to all the incoming Australian Parliamentary Papers and Bills, both Federal and the States, and also New Zealand. This is done by assigning a pencil number in order of receipt and listing the receipts. This arbitrary system serves well as a finding aid until the bound, correctly arranged volumes are sent. This is indexing at its very simplest, but it is an effective aid to locating specific Papers in a hurry.

Our own *Legislative Reference Index* of comparative legislation appears to be unique to this Library. A strip index is employed, and the Government Publications Officer scans all incoming official publications so that items of comparative legislation may be added strip by strip chronologically. Items relative to current or proposed legislation in Victoria are specially featured. The Index is used as an adjunct to Current Information Files of clippings and bibliography. As the Stripdex pages can be easily photocopied, the subjects listed can form an instant bibliography of Bills, Debates and Acts, especially those of Great Britain, N.Z., the Australian States, the Australian Government, and sometimes Canada and the U.S.A. Annually,

\*Based on a short talk to the Society of Indexers in Australia.

the whole *Legislative Reference Index* is photocopied to make a master volume and the individual subjects (such as Aborigines, Capital Punishment, Objectionable Literature, Pollution, etc.) are added to the Current Information Files.

Much important work was done in the past. The Library has a hand-written one-volume *Index to pamphlets (1856-1900)*. This was maintained in subject and author form, until the Commonwealth Parliament moved in to the Parliament House in Melbourne in 1901 following the Federation of the Australian States. There is a photocopy of this Index at LaTrobe Library, State Library of Victoria, but in most cases the pamphlets are also held and listed in the State Library collections. Appropriately, the first entry, Volume 1, number 1, is entitled 'The discovery of gold'. Gold and gold-mining were the tremendous influences in the 1850s in the newly established State of Victoria.

A useful, but quaint and often inconsistent, guide to Victorian Parliamentary Papers is that published in 1909 and entitled *Index to the Parliamentary Papers . . . 1851-1909*, compiled by J. M. Worthington. Here I must pay tribute to the fine work done over many years by the present Librarian at LaTrobe University, Mr D. H. Borchardt, for his work in providing indexes and guides to Parliamentary papers in the series *Studies in Australian Bibliography*. To date the *Checklist of Royal Commissions, Select Committees of Parliament and Boards of Inquiry* includes Part I and IA Commonwealth of Australia 1900-1950, 1950-60; Part II Tasmania, 1856-1959; Part III Victoria 1856-1960; Part IV New South Wales, 1855-1960. Wentworth Press in Sydney has published the middle

volumes, but Part IV was published by LaTrobe University Library itself in 1975.

The most recent bibliography of government publications in Australia was published in Melbourne by the Library Council of Victoria in April 1976 and is called *Government publications of Australia: a list of lists*.

Statistics play a vital part in our information services to Members of Parliament. We arrange the publications of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (A.B.S.) (formerly the Commonwealth Bureau of Census & Statistics) by the numbers used in their 1976 *Publications of the Australian Bureau of Statistics* (Canberra A.B.S.) To be used effectively, this index requires constant annotating and see-also references to bring allied subjects together. The next edition may codify the collection better, but, with a meticulous officer shelf-listing the publications received by the A.B.S. arbitrary notation, we manage quick retrieval. Information about Local Government in our own State is supplied by the *Town planning and local government guide*, published in Melbourne by the Law Book Company. The *Guide* features a comprehensive and cumulative index volume, now in its 5th edition covering 1956-1973.

The third edition, in 1972, of the N.S.W. Parliamentary Library publication of *Government publications in Australia* contains a useful discussion by R. N. D. Baker on 'Indexing problems in N.S.W. Government publications'. However, he does pay tribute, by means of comparison, to the guides to indexing in the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers of Australian government publications* (Canberra, A.G.P.S., 1972). It would be a great help if those who prepare indexes to the various Yearbooks and Government Gazettes throughout Australia were guided by the *Style manual*. However, we must gratefully acknowledge the marked improvement in the index of the *Victorian Yearbook* and particularly that of the valuable special Centenary Edition, 1973. The long-awaited *Australian Government Digest* (Canberra, A.G.P.S. 1973-1975) has indexes of both subjects and persons, with special emphasis on the Ministers and their Departments. The indexes had become increasingly efficient. The demise of the *Australian Government Digest* in December 1975 was a great blow to librarians, political scientists and those interested in the processes of government. However, advice has just been received that a publication of similar scope entitled the *Commonwealth Record* will appear weekly from July 1976 with promises of

monthly indexing, cumulating quarterly and annually. This will be published by the Australian Government Publishing Service (A.G.P.S.) in Canberra.

The National Library in Canberra produces *Australian Government Publications* now issued quarterly, with annual cumulations. This is a field ripe for development in Australia. The State Libraries of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania bring out useful lists of official publications, while the Parliamentary Library of Western Australia has recently produced *Official publications of W.A.*; Queensland and South Australia still lag behind. There are many difficulties in finding and locating all official publications, especially those not printed by the Government Printer. The parliamentary libraries are all considering the best ways to bring indexes of current information to the M.P.s. Canberra has taken a lead and so we have the fortnightly Australian Parliamentary Library's *Index to Current Information* (ALERT service), primarily for the use of Senators and Members and therefore distributed on a limited basis.

Various State Parliamentary Libraries also produce lists of current information for the use of Members of Parliament. Queensland is producing *TOPICS; Transcripts of Parlib's Information Classification System* and its complementary *Index to Articles Selected from Periodicals Currently Received, Incorporating Abstracts*.

Tasmania's publication is entitled *Subject Index to Current Serials*, while Western Australia has *Current Awareness Service: Annotated Index to Current Information*.

N.S.W. Parliamentary Library has over the years produced various indexes, the last one being *Australian Parliamentary Serials: a working checklist of sessional volumes*. The N.S.W. Parliamentary Librarian, Dr Russell Cope, has been appointed a National Editor in connection with the *Government Publications Review*, a quarterly published in New York by SEBD Publications Inc. (1973- ).

As much of our work is concerned with legal material, we welcomed the appearance in 1973 of *Current Australian and New Zealand Legal Literature Index* (Sydney, Law Book Co.). Another Law Book Company publication of great value is the *Australian Legal Monthly Digest* with its excellent index cumulating each month. Then there is Butterworth's *Australian Current Law*, also with a cumulating index.

However, as these are designed for lawyers, one must think in legal terms when using them.

Commerce Clearing House (CCH) are now well established in Australia and produce various guides to current information. The Parliament of Victoria uses the weekly *National Economic and Legislative Report* and the *Environmental Report*. The firm is keen to make the quarterly indexes to these publications of more use to its clients. It also publishes in the fields of taxation and company law.

One of the greatest boons to a parliamentary librarian would be a published and up-to-date newspaper index. A valuable tool is the *Argus Index* (1910-1949[June]). We also subscribe to *The Times Index* from London, but its quarterly volumes have been running sadly behind and this is inconvenient as we hold the airmail edition of *The Times*. The *Nation Review Index* enhances the value of the paper and helps in establishing a chronology of notable events, but it only began in October 1970 and has been short-lived in printed form. An interesting development to follow will be the service of *SVP (Australia)*, which, on a subscription basis, will make available to clients information from the *Australian Financial Review* and *Sydney Morning Herald* indexes. It will be more convenient for our Sydney counterparts, hundreds of miles away, who will be only a local telephone call away from the SVP resources.

The situation regarding indexes to periodicals is much brighter. The application of PRECIS indexing and computerisation to the National Library production *Australian Public Affairs Information Service (A.P.A.I.S.)* will increase its value even further. *Australian Science Index (C.S.I.R.O.)\** is a most valuable tool in the fields of science and technology. These indexes could well merit a discussion on their own. The *Australian Education Index* published in Melbourne by the Australian Council for Educational Research is another really competent guide.

The National Library loose-leaf multi-volume union list *Serials in Australian Libraries Social Sciences and Humanities (SALSSAH)* and the C.S.I.R.O. union list *Scientific Serials in Australian Libraries (SSAL)* are vital tools for use in locating the whereabouts of serial publications. The first two-volume edition of *SALSSAH* in 1963 is useful for us at Parliament because of the

\*(Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.)

official publications listed in it, which do not always appear in the current edition where scope has been closely defined.

The locally produced *Guidelines* (Mt Waverley, Victorian Bibliographic Services) is a general index to popular periodicals, with a management favourable to suggestion and constructive criticism. Although designed initially for school libraries, it has good general coverage.

*Pinpointer: A Current Subject Guide to Popular Periodicals* is brought out monthly in Adelaide by the Libraries Board of South Australia and is handy for hobbyists and those keen on the popular-type magazine. The overseas indexes of special concern in a library serving parliamentarians are in the fields of the social sciences. Paramount are the H. W. Wilson Indexes, *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* and *Social Sciences and Humanities Index*, published in New York. The latter has expanded to become two publications. *Humanities* has now become an index in its own right, with the emphasis on history and literature. *Social Sciences Index* best suits our fields of interest. From England we receive the Library Association publication *British Humanities Index*. The B.H.I. subject headings sometimes seem quaint if one has been nurtured on the American Wilson indexes. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: Weekly Diary of World Events with Index Continually Kept Up to Date* (London) really lives up to its title and is a most valuable tool for a Parliamentary Library.

Those concerned with indexing should be aware of new developments in information retrieval and the use of thesauri. In 1971, the Commonwealth Bureau of Roads brought out *Thesaurus of Terms, a List of Terms and their Relationships used in the Library as a Vocabulary in Indexing and Retrieving Information*. A discussion of mechanised indexing is outside the scope of this talk. We will look to the National Library in Canberra for the lead in this field.

That notable and continuing production the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* has also brought forth some useful by-products, such as the duplicated two volumes from the Australian National University in Canberra entitled *Biographical Register: Short List (1963)*. This has been such a useful tool for use in the Parliamentary Library when historical research has to

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