The Society of Indexers


The Council has pleasure in submitting the following report on the Society's activities during the year ended 31st March 1977.

Council. There have been five meetings of the Council. After a period of abeyance, representation Aslib on the Council has been restored. Mr D. W. Pygott, already a member of the Council by election, has accepted nomination by Aslib, and is thus welcomed as a co-opted member in accordance with Clause 7(e) of the Constitution.

Membership. For the first time, the end-of-year membership has reached the 400 mark:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New members</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Withdrawn*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31/3/76</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK &amp; Else</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Withdrawn* includes all terminations of membership, through change of circumstances, retirement from indexing, ill health, even death; in only rare instances did the increased membership subscription prove a deterrent; and there were very few who merely allowed their membership to lapse without notice.)

The number of new members (89) was 15 more than in the previous year (74). There was a phenomenal increase, however, in the number of enquiries about membership. The previous year's total (142) was almost equalled during the first half-year (137). In the second half-year, an unsolicited reference to the Society in Woman's Own in October, followed in January by a misleadingly produced feature on BBC 4's "Woman's Hour", gave impetus to a spate of 756 enquiries (297 of them in February alone). These brought the year's total to 893. These had no perceptible influence on the growth of membership, and served only to demonstrate the disadvantages of inappropriate publicity.

Finance. The Accounts are published separately. Despite the pressures of inflation, the membership subscription will remain unchanged at £5.00 for the year 1977-78.

The Register. On 31st March 1977, there were 108 Registered Indexers. The Registrar received seventy-six enquiries from authors and publishers, and others seeking help in commissioning indexes. On a quarterly basis, the numbers were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>April-June</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July-September</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October-December</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>January-March</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is an increase of eighteen on the previous year. It is the practice to give three or four names in response to each enquiry, and the Registrar provided more than 200 possible contacts. To minimize the cost of administering the Register, no notification is now given to indexers when they are named to enquirers; and members would find it helpful if they enquired of publishers how their names had been acquired. It is worth repeating that the Registrar, by introducing an indexer to a publisher, quite often initiates a relationship which is likely to endure as long as the indexer delivers satisfactory work.

A notable feature this year has been the growth of enquiries from Continental publishers, especially in Holland and Sweden, who are producing an increasing number of works in English. One very significant development was a request to the Registrar to act as co-ordinator for the indexing of a series of American publications produced in Holland. If the organizers of this operation had planned it on these lines from the very outset rather than at a late stage, it would doubtless not have run into the financial difficulties which led to its downfall. There is no question that, with the floating pound, employing British indexers is increasingly attractive.

All Registered Indexers are urged to maintain contact with the Registrar. In various fields, particularly in law, all the sciences, accounting, finance, and economics, specialist indexers should find their services in demand.

Board of Assessors. The Council re-appointed Mrs H. K. Bell, Dr J. E. Holmstrom, Mr A. B. Lyons, Dr Maxine Merrington, Mr D. W. Pygott, Mrs K. M. Suggate, and Mrs E. J. Wallis for 1976-77. The Board appointed Dr Holmstrom as its Chairman and Mr Pygott...
Vice-Chairman. Mrs R. J. Dawe volunteered to undertake the duties of Secretary to the Board, and the Council was pleased to appoint her, on the Board's recommendation, from 1st June, 1976. In addition to its quarterly meetings, the Board has devoted considerable time to reviewing in detail the procedure for applying for admission to the Register, and for assessing applications. Extensive revisions, for adoption from 1st May 1977, are being notified in full detail, with the approval of the Council, to all members of the Society.

The Board has considered twenty-two applications. Eleven applicants were admitted to the Register, and eleven were recommended to re-apply in due course. Warm appreciation is again expressed to all those Registered Indexers (more than thirty of them during the year) who have voluntarily undertaken first-stage assessments. Increased postal charges made it necessary to raise the “handling charge” for each applicant to £3.50.

Publications Board. In furtherance of the Society's fourth constitutional object: ‘To publish or communicate from time to time books, papers and notes on the subject of indexing’, the Council enlarged and reconstituted the Editorial Board, expanded its sphere of responsibility to other publications in addition to the Society’s journal, and renamed it the Publications Board. For 1976-77, the Council appointed the members of the former Editorial Board—Messrs L. M. Harrod, O. Norman Knight, A. A. Raven, J. M. Shaftesley, and J. L. Thornton—with the addition of Mrs D. Frame, Mr D. W. Pygott, and Mrs E. J. Wallis. The Board appointed as its own officers the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary of the Society. It has met five times since its appointment in July 1976.

The Society's first publication, apart from The Indexer, was circulated internally to members as a Discussion Paper at the turn of the year. This was a twenty-page pamphlet, Problems in determining fees for indexing, written by Mr R. S. Haig-Brown and edited by Mr N. R. Fisk, to both of whom the Council expresses its own and the Board's indebtedness for the time and effort voluntarily contributed. Much ground has been covered towards the preparation of other publications for sale both to members and to non-members, and of revised information literature concerning the Society. Details of these will be announced in due course.

The Indexer. The Publications Board has devoted much attention to the finances, business administration, and circulation of the Society's journal, as well as to proposals concerning future editorial developments. Circulation continues to increase, not only to the growing membership of the Society and its affiliated Societies, but also to subscribers in more than fifty overseas countries. There is a continued demand for back numbers, all of which are still in print. The Council accepted with regret the resignation of Mrs H. A. Levin as Assistant Editor, and expresses its gratitude to Miss M. Piggott for undertaking the responsibilities of this office for the production of the April 1977 number.

Librarian. The Council accepted with regret the resignation of Mr L. M. Harrod as Librarian, and welcomed Miss M. Piggott's acceptance of appointment as his successor. They and Mr A. A. Raven were re-appointed as Library Committee for 1976-77.

Programme Committee. The Council re-appointed Mrs E. J. Wallis and Mrs A. M. Wilkinson, and also appointed Mrs D. Frame and Miss M. Piggott, for 1976-77. The Committee appointed Mrs D. Frame as its Chairman, and the Society's Secretary as its Secretary. For members in the London area, six Society meetings were arranged: two were discussion meetings, on the new British Standard on Indexing (BS 3700) and on the Haig-Brown Paper; the speakers at the other four were Martyn Goff of the National Book League, Stella Keenan of Loughborough University, Dr James Hartley of Keele University, and Michael Marland of Woodberry Down School.

Edinburgh Conference. On 26th March 1977, there was held in Edinburgh the first regional conference in the Society's history. The Programme Committee reports, and the Council confirms, that this new departure owed its notable success to the initiative and enthusiasm of the Scottish members, and particularly to the unstinted labours of Mrs H. E. Flenley, Mrs D. Dainty, and Mr P. Bradley. A full report of the proceedings will be published in due course.

Local Groups. The Programme Committee reports the formation of a local group in East Anglia. Its first meeting was held in the Colchester area, and the possibility of developments in other parts of the region is being explored, on the initiative of Mrs D. Blake and Mrs A. M. Surrey.
**Twenty-first Anniversary Conference.** Next year, to mark the twenty-first anniversary of the founding of the Society, the Council has authorized the Programme Committee to proceed with the planning of an international conference, to be held at Roehampton, London, during the weekend 14th-16th July 1978. Other arrangements to celebrate this anniversary are also being planned by the Council, through its various Boards and Committees.

**Australian Society of Indexers.** The Australian Society of Indexers was formally constituted at a meeting in Melbourne on 27th April 1976. After detailed and most friendly negotiations, agreement has been reached between the Council and the Australian Society's Executive Committee on formal Terms of Affiliation between the two Societies, to be submitted for the approval of the members at General Meetings here and in Australia in May 1977. Copies of the agreed Terms are being circulated to all members with this Annual Report.

**Wheatley Medal.** The winner of the Library Association's Wheatley Medal for Indexing, 1975 (awarded in 1976), was Mrs Margaret Anderson, for her index to Miss Judith Butcher's *Copy-editing: the Cambridge handbook* (C.U.P., 1975). Both indexer and author are life-members of the Society. The Council recalls that Mrs Anderson, a member since 1961, one of the first Registered Indexers, has held office in the Society in various capacities and has contributed much to its development over the years; she has been a Vice-President since 1972. The award of the Wheatley Medal is a recognition, welcomed with particular warmth, of her professional distinction as an indexer.

The Council appointed Mrs D. Blake, Mr L. M. Harrod, and Miss M. Piggott to be the Society's representatives on the Joint Panel for 1977, with Dr J. E. Holmstrom as reserve. The past services of Mr M. Wace, who has withdrawn from the panel after six consecutive years, are greatly appreciated.

**Revised British Standard on Indexing.** The Council welcomes the publication of the extensively revised edition of *Recommendations for the preparation of indexes . . .* (BS 3700 : 1976), and recommends it to the attention of all members, with a special reminder that the Board of Assessors' revised assessment procedure is firmly rooted in the provision of BS 3700 : 1976. As indicated in last year's Annual Report, the Society's contribution to the preparation of the new Standard has been very substantial.

**National Book League.** It gives the Council special pleasure to announce a reciprocal arrangement between the National Book League and the Society, that each organization should accord honorary corporate (institutional) membership to the other. This does not mean, of course, that individual members of either organization thus become entitled to the rights and privileges of membership of the other. What it does provide is an open channel of communication, a basis for friendly and constructive co-operation. Above all, it gives formal recognition to a long-standing and much valued relationship.

**Relations with Publishers.** As recommended at last year's national conference, the Council circulated to members a confidential questionnaire asking for factual information about the commissioning of indexes. The response has been gratifying, and has provided much information which will be of value in developing the Society's good relationships with publishers, as well as its advisory services to members. In quantity and complexity, the replies have set a considerable task of analysis and evaluation, which is still in progress.

**Indexing Fees.** The Council has kept this matter under review and is considering a proposal to increase the recommended minimum rate early in 1977-78.

**National Union of Journalists.** Agreement has been reached with the National Union of Journalists that there is no conflict of interest between the Union and the Society, between whom a cordial relationship has been established.

**Honorary Professional Advisers.** The Council has expressed good wishes and sympathy to Mr Leslie Paisner, who has been unwell and has (at least temporarily) retired. Mr Martin Paisner has generously undertaken, meanwhile, to act as the Society's legal adviser. To Mr William Davies, the Society's elected auditor, gratitude is once again expressed for his unfailing guidance on financial matters.

**Service to the Society.** On behalf of all the members, the Council places on record the Society's indebtedness to its officers and to all those members—too numerous to name individually—whose hard work and enthusiasm is the life-blood of the Society.
Newcomers to Indexing. The Council notes with interest that enrolments for the correspondence course, according to information supplied by the Rapid Results College, have increased from sixty-one last year to 110 in 1976-77.

The Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting held on 19th May 1977, the officers and members of Council were re-elected. As there were no nominations for the vacant place on Council, a member will be invited by Council to serve for one year.

A vote of thanks was passed to the auditor for his services, and he was reappointed for the year 1977-78.

The remainder of the business on the agenda was approved.

As stated elsewhere in this issue, the Carey Award was made, for the first time, to our President, G. Norman Knight.

News of the Society

The Publications Board has—as does the Board of Assessors and the Council—the standards of published book indexes constantly before it, and at its last meeting expressed the view that it would be useful if members of the Society would write personally to the publishers of books the indexes to which they find unsatisfactory. Such letters should indicate in what way the indexes failed to meet the needs of the writers of the letters. In order that such comments should reach the member of staff most likely to be concerned, the letters should be addressed to the chief editor of the publisher.

Council, in considering the Board’s report, confirmed that this would be a useful thing for members to do.

If members would care to write a letter to the Editor of The Indexer detailing the frustrations they have found in using the indexes of specific books, or generalizations concerning the shortcomings of indexes in contemporary books, he will be pleased to consider publishing them either in the correspondence column or as anonymous paragraphs.

Members, publishers and British librarians are reminded that they may nominate indexes of high quality for consideration for the 1977 Medal. The conditions are set out on p.112 of the October 1972 issue of The Indexer; such nominations should be sent to the Editor of Publications, The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, Store Street, London, WC1E 7AE not later than 15th February 1978.

Extracts from the guide to those making nominations, which is also used by the adjudicating panel, were published on pages 22-3 of our issue for April 1974.

Our Contributors

It is regretted that by an oversight the name of Mr C. D. Needham was omitted from this column in our April issue; Mr Needham is a Principal Lecturer in the School of Librarianship at the Polytechnic of North London.

Mr Leif Kajberg is Head of the Research Secretariat at the Royal School of Librarianship, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Robin Kinross is a graduate student doing research at the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, University of Reading.

Mrs Jacqueline D. Sisson has been associated with the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, for thirty years and is Head of the Fine Arts Library and an Associate Professor in Library Administration there. In 1976 she was presented with the Special Libraries Association 1976 Professional Award for the contribution which the Index about which she writes has made to the library profession.

HAVE YOU ENTERED THE DATES OF THE 1978 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN YOUR DIARY? FOR BRIEF INFORMATION SEE OUR APRIL ISSUE.