THE ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE
14th-16th JULY 1978

The central event of the Society's 21st Anniversary Year will be a unique occasion: the very first international gathering since the inaugural meeting on 30th March 1957. Of the 57 people who attended that first meeting at the National Book League, only one came from outside the United Kingdom, and he will be the first of the speakers at the International Conference. It seemed very much a British enterprise; but one of the founders, now a Vice-President of the Society, referred even at that early stage to 'the international as well as the national importance of good indexing'.

International interest and influence began slowly. Yet, little by little, it has grown formidably. We know already, as this Anniversary Number of The Indexer goes to press, almost half a year before the Conference takes place, that countries to be represented will include Austria, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and West Germany, and even distant Fiji. There will also, of course, be delegates from two affiliated national Societies of Indexers, in the USA and in Australia, and from the most recently formed Society—in Canada—now negotiating formal affiliation. From at least as many other countries, in all five continents, we have received expressions of the desire to attend, which we hope will be fulfilled.

The opening session of the Conference, in the early evening of Friday 14th July, will also be a special occasion in its own right, with special booking arrangements for those who are unable to attend the whole Conference. It will take the form of a Reception by our Founder-President, G. Norman Knight, followed by the Presidential Dinner. The Library Association is paying its tribute by making the formal presentation of the Wheatley Medal (if one is awarded this year) during the Reception. Allen & Unwin are hastening the publication of the President's new book on indexing in order that its launching party may coincide with the Reception. The Society plans to launch also two other publications; its own Select Reading List on Indexing and an Anniversary commemorative volume of Selections from 'The Indexer', 1958-77, edited by L. M. Harrod.

Above all else, this opening hour-and-a-quarter will be a social occasion. Norman Knight, as Founder, looks forward with particular pleasure to renewing personal acquaintance with those who helped to create the Society. All who became members by July 1957 are formally designated Founder-Members, and their attendance—whether still members or not—would be warmly welcomed. It will be of interest throughout the Society that the following Founder-Members are still with us after more than two decades:

Doreen Blake
Joseph G. Cockburn
Robert L. Collison
R. D. (Sally) Coole
William Davies
Geoffrey Dixon
Gladys C. Edwards
Philip E. Found
A. Reginald Hewitt
Grace Holmes
J. Edwin Holmstrom
Joan M. Hykin
Hebe Jerrold
G. Norman Knight
Evangeline M. Laing
John R. Lansley
Andrew B. Lyons
The Reception will not, however, look back only to the very beginnings. There will be interesting reunions for many members who are ‘under-21s’; first acquaintances for members both old and new; ‘hands-across-the-sea’ contacts; and, for the first time in our history, members may well find themselves outnumbered by our many friends from outside the Society, all drawn together by the sense of occasion and by a common interest in the orderly use and arrangement of words and ideas.

The Conference programme and all the detailed arrangements for the week-end have been widely publicized and need not be repeated here. What does need to be said, though, is what a profound influence the Conference has already had, even before it has taken place. Within the Society, the willingness of UK members to give practical help in organizing the Conference grows month by month; and special tribute is due to our members in overseas countries, most of whom have worked with tremendous enthusiasm and effectiveness to spread news of the Society in general and the Conference in particular. The feeling that they are isolated by distance from Society contacts and activities is rapidly giving way to a very real sense of belonging and of playing an important role in our widespread community of indexers. Our ties with our related Societies in Australia, Canada and the USA have likewise been greatly intensified; and there has been an almost astonishing resurgence in the contacts and co-operation between the American Society and ourselves, setting in train an interchange of experience and ideas which promises to become increasingly fruitful during this Anniversary Year and in the years ahead.

Externally, too, our contacts with other organizations, both nationally and internationally, with publishers in numerous countries, with libraries and schools of librarianship and academic institutions generally, are widening and deepening.

The pre-Conference repercussions being so widespread, there is every reason to suppose that the Conference itself will appropriately crown the Society’s first 21 years of effort and achievement. But as we look back at the past from this particular milestone with modest satisfaction, and with a keen sense of gratitude to the pioneers who have blazed the trail, it is essentially to the future that our minds and energies must be turned. For the Society and its affiliates, and for the betterment of indexing, there is still a long and challenging road ahead.

J. Ainsworth Gordon

The Founding of the American Society of Indexers

Alan Greengrass

(This article will appear in G. Norman Knight’s forthcoming book, Indexing, the art of, and is herewith printed by kind permission of G. Norman Knight and Messrs Allen and Unwin, the publishers.)

It ought to be easy to write about the founding of a society less than ten years old. The participants have not dispersed too far and memories should not have grown too dim. But somehow it is not easy to pinpoint exactly how the American Society of Indexers came into being. Even though we all should have known it was history in the making, the details have begun to fade.