FIRST

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

in celebration of
its Twenty-first Anniversary

LONDON, 14th to 16th JULY, 1978

More than a hundred participants from 16 countries gathered at Digby Stuart College for the Society’s first residential, first international conference. It proved a most amicable, stimulating and in every way rewarding occasion, for which many thanks are due to its initiator and chief toiler, our Secretary, John Ainsworth Gordon.

Presidential reception

We were delighted that G. Norman Knight, Founder of the Society 21 years ago, and its President since 1970, was able to be present on the Friday evening. Unfortunately his doctor had forbidden his giving his introductory speech himself; this was read on his behalf by Mrs Elizabeth Wallis, the Registrar of the Society:

Fellow Members of the Society of Indexers and of the American Society, the Australian Society, and the Canadian Society, fellow delegates and guests: Accustomed as I am to public speaking, it has given me the greatest pleasure to find myself presiding over such a distinguished gathering. And also, I am afraid, a certain diffidence, the latter being due to a fear that anything I may have to say about indexing in such company may become quite superfluous. Those here today come from so many countries—America, Australia, Canada, Eire, Fiji, France, Holland, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad, Wales and West Germany.

I know, at any rate, that one thing is true; you will all be relieved to learn that I propose to keep my remarks very short indeed.

There is, however, one word of warning I should like to impart to you—bred from my own experience. Always make it very clear what kind of indexer you are. It seems that there are other categories of people who call themselves ‘indexers’ which we should scarcely recognize as being indexers at all and which have no place in the Concise Oxford Dictionary; I will give you an instance. Many years ago I used to advertise my wares in the Times Literary Supplement. I once received a reply from a man who asked me to supply the shortest time and space that I should need to ‘cut the index’ to a certain technological work! I still do not know exactly what he was requiring.

As we go to press we learn with great regret that Norman Knight, our Founder and President, died peacefully during the afternoon of Thursday 17th August, in his 87th year. For the moment, we can only express our deep sense of loss. Not until our next issue, shall we be able to pay due tribute to him. May he rest well after his untiring and warm-hearted labours.

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On behalf of Bill Bartenbach, President of the American Society of Indexers. Mrs. Dorothy Thomas, from New York, then read the following message:

Circumstances prevent me from joining you at the first International Conference in London.

It is with great pleasure that I convey, on behalf of the American Society of Indexers, greetings and good wishes for a successful conference.

The American Society of Indexers is proud to be associated with The Society of Indexers in the common goal of improving the quality of indexing and securing useful standards for the field. We look forward to continued cooperation in our various efforts, in particular, in the publicising of The Indexer, the professional journal of the societies. To strengthen the bonds between the two societies, I have appointed one of our young and dynamic members, Mr John Regazzi, as liaison officer to The Society of Indexers.

We are ever conscious of the importance of indexes to allow easy access to information. One of the goals we have set for the coming year will be a letter-campaign to publishers and book review editors, to raise their consciousness regarding the importance of indexes. We will attempt to convey the idea that a book without an index is of greatly diminished value or, to express it more poetically (as in a recent book review): 'A book without an index is like a wine without a bouquet.'

With the support of the H. W. Wilson Company, the American Society of Indexers is in the process of establishing an indexing award to bring greater recognition in the publishing and library communities of the importance of book indexing. We shall look forward to learning from The Society of Indexers your procedures in selecting the most outstanding index, as you have done so admirably with the Wheatley Medal.

Again, let me wish you a successful International Conference, combined with an invitation to hold the next International Conference in Indexing in the United States at whatever date the Conference selects.

The Secretary of the Australian Society of Indexers, Miss Jean Hagger, then said:

It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the Australian Society of Indexers. First, I wish to congratulate The Society of Indexers on its 21 years of service to the profession of indexing. Also, I wish to thank the Society for the help and encouragement it has given to other societies, such as the one I represent. Thirdly, I wish it well for the future, especially for the success of this conference which is such an important professional occasion. I would also invite you to celebrate the Society's next 21st birthday in Australia!

The President of the newly-formed IASC, Peter Greig, spoke next:

On behalf of The Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada/Soctete Canadienne pour l'analyse de documents, I extend best wishes to The Society of Indexers on this occasion and for the future, and to Norman Knight for successfully bringing this society into being, and for giving the rest of us the model of the society to follow.

Presentation of the Wheatley Medal

Mr Godfrey Thompson, President of the Library Association, called upon Mr L. M. Harrod, Chairman of the Selection Panel, to announce the winner of the Library Association Wheatley Medal, 1977 (awarded on the recommendation of a joint panel of the Society of Indexers and the Library Association).

The award went to Index to Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1901-1960; compiled by T. Rowland Powel, with lists and notes by Donald Moore, published by the Cambrian Archaeological Association.