give much employment to women. It is a sedentary occupation. . . . To a lady has been entrusted the indexing of Hansard’s parliamentary debates . . . ’ Has much changed?

In no. 3 appears an illuminating article by Peter H. Dawe on co-ordinate indexing which covers the subject splendidly (for manual application, though ease of adaptation to computer-use is emphasized).

A new draft Constitution was printed in no. 3, and no. 4 announces that it has been accepted. No. 4 also contains a nomination form for next year’s committee. And by the way, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority wants indexers for its bibliographic data base, REEF. Could this be the seaside holiday-with-a-difference we have all been awaiting?

Finally, AusSI prints an attractive invitation in no. 2 (from John Gordon, SI Chairman) to the ‘New Horizons in Indexing’ weekend conference to be held in Bristol, England, 8-10 July, 1983, and in no. 4 a further encouragement to attend this internationally oriented occasion. Perhaps we shall all have an opportunity to put faces to a few names—delightful thought!

Fund (shortly expected to reach £100 or more per annum) may be put; and announces that the Society’s President, Robert Collison, has received the American Library Association’s Isadore Gilbert Mudge Citation for ‘distinguished contributions to reference librarianship’.

Members are reminded that they have access to the Library Association Library in London, and ‘strongly advised’ to consult the Society before mentioning its name in commercial contexts, or in the press, much inadvertent chaos having been caused by failure to observe this courtesy.

SI, too, is redrafting its Constitution.

A new venture: since ‘it is becoming clearer day by day that computerized indexing is here to stay’, it is hoped to inaugurate a ‘special technological newsletter’ as soon as possible.

We shall hope by the next bulletin to have the latest reports from Canada; and perhaps soon the first one from the new TIG(NZLA) (The Indexing Group (New Zealand Library Association))! (This contributor cherishes the hope that this latest offspring may yet consent to christen itself Society of Indexers, New Zealand—purely for the sake of acronymity, of course.)

Let us hope for the first time that this year’s conference will be held off the coast of Ireland—perhaps under the sponsorship of the local chapter of SI.

Let us also remember to congratulate Mr. John Mason, the Managing Librarian of the International Who’s Who in UK Libraries, on his 50th birthday—though he will still be working, of course.

Society of Indexers (Summer 1982, October 1982)

The Secretary asks members to suggest a specific purpose to which the interest on the G. Norman Knight Fund (shortly expected to reach £100 or more per annum) may be put; and announces that the Society’s President, Robert Collison, has received the American Library Association’s Isadore Gilbert Mudge Citation for ‘distinguished contributions to reference librarianship’.

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Letters to the Editor

Filing rules for subheadings

Mary Piggott’s review of publications on filing rules (The Indexer April 1982, pp. 62-4) was of particular interest to me, as it raises the question of arrangement of L.C. subheadings by date, with the example: India—History.

When we started thinking in terms of a computerized catalogue for the University of Hong Kong Libraries four or more years ago, this was one of the problems which it seemed to me could be solved in advance, and which we proceeded to do in exactly the way that Miss Piggott suggested. Thus, our new entries under India—History take the form:

India—History—1175-1765 (Mohammedan rule)
—1500-1765 (European settlement)
—1765-1947 (British occupation)

For centuries, we use

India—History—1800-1899
not strictly accurate, but easier to understand than
1801-1900. There are also other subheadings without
verbal descriptors, such as

India—History—1947-

However, we have not successfully been able to transpose
all L.C. subheadings, e.g.

India—History—Early to 324 B.C.

As it happens, we have not made the use which we
expected of the computer in sequencing entries, since
instead of proceeding to COM microfiche we are still
using (computed printed) cards, filed manually. It seems,
moreover, that Miss Piggott’s and our solution to this

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problem may be rendered redundant, by the online keyword index which we are in the process of developing. This bears some relationship to the 'KWUC' (Keyword and UDC) catalogue instituted at the UIA Library, Antwerp (see H. D. L. Vervliet, 'The machine-readable catalogues of the UIA Library, Antwerp' in Program, v.8 (1974), p. 117-33), but being online instead of COM is differently structured. Our KWAD (Keyword and Dewey) catalogue has been demonstrated, and we hope to introduce it on an experimental basis shortly. If it proves as effective and as popular as we anticipate, development will be accelerated, and a full description will be published. Meanwhile, it should be explained that the experimental version of KWAD varies greatly from an earlier proposal (in H. A. Rydings, 'Progress towards computerization of the University of Hong Kong Libraries', in Journal of the Hong Kong Library Association, no. 5 (1980), p. 43-6). Searches may be made by keywords derived from author, title, or subject (alphabetical or Dewey number), or any combination of these.

The finer points of filing rules, especially as practised in large library catalogues, have always been something of a mystery to me, and any method which circumvents this, and replaces the vast labour of filing and checking the filing of catalogue cards will be, I feel sure, a great boon.

H. A. Rydings
Librarian, University of Hong Kong Libraries

Hateful indexing?

The Editor asks for comments on Paul Johnson's description of indexing in the previous issue of this journal as 'the most hateful of tasks'. This, he says, is because it demands unremitting concentration, and yields none of the creative pleasures that compensate for intellectual labour.

Taking the complainant on his own ground first, why is mental concentration hateful? It is surely more enjoyable than mental idleness. And why is indexing not creative? Is it not the construction (creation) of a useful mechanism, that may be beautiful in its own way?

Two other points: for the book-lover, making an index is participating in the world of books—contributing, even if behind the scenes, to all the delights and interests of that world. And making an index also means the practice of an ever-developing skill, than which nothing can be more satisfying.

When one adds to all this the fact that indexing is one of the few forms of 'gainful employment' that can be conveniently carried on at home, it is hard to see how anyone can call it hateful.

M. D. Anderson, Cambridge

In 1916, H. G. Wells wrote: 'The English do not understand indexing'; in 1982, Paul Johnson added: 'Indexing is the most hateful of tasks'. (Both quoted in The Indexer 13 (2), pp. 122 and 110.)

Of course! If the English liked indexing, wouldn't London be more like Napoleonic Paris; and wouldn't its streets be numbered on a grid system, as in North America?

The English are rightly credited with tolerance, but, equally, they should be debited with two anti-indexing qualities—hypocrisy and secrecy.

But the fact remains that an index is a labour-saving device. Like piped running water, it saves going to the well each day, especially if you've forgotten exactly where the well is, or even whether there is one in a particular area.

Allan Bula,
Bexhill-on-sea

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Index as toe-in-the-water

Paul Barnett (alias John Grant) described in the last issue of The Indexer (pp. 111-13), his frustrations caused by poor indexes in conducting research for his book, A directory of discarded ideas (Ashgrove Press, 1981), and the prominence he had given in that book's bibliography to 'indicating those books with lousy indexes and those with none at all'.

Indeed, the note at the head of the bibliography reads:

'If like me you are daily driven mad by books without indexes or—perhaps worse—with inadequate indexes, you will be pleased to note that a * indicates a book with an inadequate index, **a book without a blasted index at all. (* is pronounced "curse".)'

The list includes 84 books, of which 32 are castigated * (inadequate index), and 8, ** (no index). 44 books presumably therefore had acceptable indexes provided—a little over 50%. An imperfect world, my masters.

The index to A directory of discarded ideas itself, compiled by its author, is full, with typographic indication of 3 levels of entries. One in particular illustrates how an index entry can serve alone as an indicator of a book's scope and tone:

Universe 77-88, 106, 170; age of 147; as boiled egg 87; expanding 74, 77, 85; geocentric 35, 44-5, 50, 73, 96, 105, 110-13, 117; as giant brain 65; heat death 170; heliocentric 119-21; infinite 74, 117; intelligent 65, 87-8; made for Man 33; orgone-permeated 72; radiant 83-4; spiral 83; of vegetables 2; see also cosmologies, Creation •
‘There is a lucrative source of income just waiting to be exploited in your spare time.

‘Where is this vein of gold to be found? In indexes, those lists of words with page references found at the end of a book.

‘Someone has to compile them. Why not you? All you need is a logical mind, lots of blank cards and neat handwriting, or preferably, a typewriter.’

—Didn’t you realize it was as easy as that? We have the word of the ‘Money Mail’ section of the UK Daily Mail, which published in August 1982 an article by Thelma Therese opening with the paragraphs quoted above. The Secretary of the Society of Indexers, whose name and address were appended to the article without her knowledge, tells her own story of ‘The Daily Mail incident’.

D-day

Cecil Robertson
Hon. Secretary, Society of Indexers

Wednesday 4 August 1982 dawned quite beautifully. A very hectic spring and summer had bottomed out, and save for a general mailing due out on the 11th, it looked as though I would have nothing more to do for the Society before going on holiday on the 13th, except for answering your letters, tying up and filing your ends. No family crises as far as eye could see, and definitely no new grandchildren, number 11 having put in his appearance, with aplomb, in June.

But—as is the wont of crises—this one shot in from outer space, unannounced. At 1 pm, an enjoyable afternoon in prospect, the telephone rang: would you please tell me about the Society of Indexers? Normal query, normal chat, until the caller asked if I minded his having rooted out my number when ‘they’ gave only my address. This was not normal, so I asked him whom he meant by ‘they’. But of course, the Daily Mail, which had that morning published ‘your’ article. My heart plunging, I waved the caller goodbye, took the receiver off the hook again and beat it round to the newsagent. There it stood, in black and white, under banner headlines, a pseudonym and ever such a humorous drawing of a young mother working at a table with a baby atop each of several piles of page-proofs; and there I stood, reading it on the pavement until my writhings and imprecations looked like becoming a public nuisance. For the article was incomparably worse than its anticipation, the message, golden and clear, being that any ninny with a pencil could be making a fortune; just write to me for details of this fantastic offer.

For the rest of that day, punctuated by calls from other enterprising readers, my long-suffering husband rushed hither and yon getting material reproduced, while I collated some 250 sets of SI literature, each topped by a note of direst warning, and rewarded myself late at night by writing—in unadulterated adrenalin—vitiolic letter number one to the editor of this our Great National Daily tabloid paper.

Thursday morning brought a mere 89 letters; so the day was spent answering these, and duplicating and collating another 250 sets. Friday produced 237 enquiries and Saturday 323, together with some cheerful cracks from the postman; I spent around 14 hours each day, still sustained by fury and broken only by the composition and despatch of a second letter to the editor of the Daily Mail—whose silence was deafening—telling him that from 11-31 August inclusive all enquiries originating from the article, together with any already received without stamps for return, would be sent to him for action. (On 11th, 12th and 13th I did just that, packing and posting, with some glee, and fast. During the last half of the month the house was empty, so that on my return the front door had to be opened with a battering ram; and the Daily Mail subsequently received a very big parcel).

Meanwhile, the afternoon of Sunday 8th saw my visiting family sitting round the dining table alphabetsing the 649 letters so far arrived. Oh indexer, sitting peacefully at home with shoeboxes of cards of identical quality and size, may you never know this particular chore: for whereas Mr Zebedee Shufflebottom writes on 4” x 5½” Bronco, the Dowager Countess of Sitwell goes more for your deckle-edge, cream-laid, double-woved crested A4 variety. (Another sociological note: right across all categories of stationery and standing, those enquirers who do include return postage at all may be divided into sheep, goats and bugbears; sheep send stamped addressed envelopes into which the would-be contents fit, goats send a stamp but no envelope, and bugbears send a stamped addressed envelope into which the contents will somehow go).

By the end of Tuesday 10th, the total had risen to 1199 letters, and all with return stamps had been answered; now, as I write on Christmas Eve, more than four months later, they are still coming. I have dealt with approximately 1500 and have returned another 800 or so to the