

Bristol fashion



A happy group of indexers at the Bristol conference, 1983.

To read through the Newsletters of our several Societies is to be aware that we share at least one problem: a large part of each membership lives close to a metropolis, while the rest of that membership is spread thinly over a great area. We are both scattered and clumped; communication is either too difficult or too easy.

Metropolitan meetings will be well-attended; governing bodies will live and work in the area. In some countries the population or structure may be such that other metropolises may act as secondary centres of power and assembly. This desirable spreading of influence may produce its own problems: a secondary centre may after all be too weak to hold for long, or it may so flourish as to weaken the original centre or the society's structure as a whole.

Still the isolated indexers of the little towns remain isolated; waiting, one supposes, for the national conferences every year, or two, or three, which they may attend if circumstances and distances allow. We may suppose also that there are members within easy reach of a metropolis whose circumstances or diffidence have kept them away from meetings. We may even suppose that there are plenty of indexers who have never met another one, and will be perfectly happy if they never do—though for these I have only sympathy.

For indexers are, are they not, warm and witty, clever and unique and wholly delightful to meet. They were to be found at the Bristol Conference in 1983 in large quantities, all engaged in different types of indexing, speaking with the accents of Devon and Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, Ayr and Puerto Rico; but all talking and talking as if each had found a conferenceful of kindred spirits.

As one new member of SI said recently: 'And of course, since Bristol, I *love* indexers'. Most of us are hooked on the craft of indexing; it seems that given half a chance we will become hooked on indexers too. What does *not* seem clear from our Newsletters is that we are succeeding as well as we might in giving each other that half a chance. Clearly *The Indexer* and the Newsletters must remain the primary means of communication, but they are largely one-way and general. Should we be

devising means of 'seeding' more Chapters, however tiny their memberships? Are we ensuring that every indexer knows who and where his neighbours are? Should we make more attempts as individuals to get two or three gathered together round a coffee pot or a crate of beer? Should we organize more and remoter local conferences, however few might come? Are we doing enough to find out who all our members are, and what they want from their Society? It is hard to believe that all of us who never meet are utterly contented, alone behind our stacks and shoeboxes, and wish in our leisure time only to escape into the other, unalphabetized world. So can we share our ideas for coming together, please; write a letter, hold out a hand. The 'Society' is an abstract; it is the members who are real.

Judy Batchelor,
Vice-Chairman, the Society of Indexers

Forthcoming conferences

The 42nd conference of the International Federation for Documentation (FID) is to be held in The Hague, 24–27 September 1984. Its subject will be the use of information. Further information from Mr A. van der Laan, c/o FID Secretariat, P.O. Box 90402, 2509 LK The Hague, Netherlands.

Professor Sir Fred Hoyle will open the Institute of Information Scientists annual conference to be held at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 3–6 July 1984. His theme, entitled 'Evolution and prediction', will survey aspects of information to be explored further in conference sessions on the politics of information, European information (for which the conference makes an excursion to France), developments in computer hardware and software, and the status of information scientists. Further information from Lyn McRostie, Union Texas Petroleum Ltd, 68–114 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LR.

Twenty years of *Documentaliste*

The French journal devoted to information science, *Documentaliste*, has celebrated its twentieth anniversary by publishing, as a supplement to volume 20, number 6, Nov.–Dec. 1983, an index to articles published since its inception in 1964.

The contents lists of the successive issues are set out with full bibliographic details, consecutively numbered. They show how interest in information science has developed in France, the growing use of automation, the formalization of training of both suppliers and users of information, and the expansion of interest in activities taking place in other countries. There is an alphabetical list of authors, another of subjects and a third of countries, each entry referring by number to the bibliographical citation in the list of articles. The index is preceded by an essay by the compiler, Catherine Mégnien-Desvé, who analyses the literature of documentation as displayed in this twenty-year bibliography.

M.P.

The National Library of Canada

Before 1953 there was no national library in Canada. Only thirty years later a Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee reports that the National Library of Canada 'is accepted by the entire [library] community as the lynchpin of the national system'. During the last decade in particular the National Library has played a prominent part in establishing a communications network across the country, to make the best use of libraries' resources in materials and staff. It has supported Canadian studies and the development of conservation methods so that existing collections will remain available for future generations. It has also assumed the international obligations of an established national library. An impressive list of publications put out by the library—many by members of its own staff—bears witness to such activities.

These outward-looking services, in addition to a large national collection's normal services, are a drain on resources and the fear is expressed that, if increased financial support is not forthcoming, some curtailment will be necessary, particularly as the demand for library services throughout the country continues to grow. There is also a shortage of accommodation, the building originally designed for the National Library having to be shared with the National Archives. It would be a loss both nationally and internationally if retrenchment were in fact necessary, especially since, as the National Librarian, Guy Sylvestre, points out in his last report before retiring, the National Library is a young institution still in process of developing its resources.¹

M.P.

1. *Annual report of the National Librarian 1982/83*. Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1983. ISSN 0315-9949.

