American Society of Indexers
(nos. 64, 65, 66)

In no. 64 is an eloquent plea to enter for the Wilson Award, and a correspondent recommends Compugramma's Micro Indexing System for IBMs. Robert Palmer amplifies his earlier thoughts [see The Indexer 14 (1), 47] on prepositions in index headings, adds some guidelines for adjectives, and suggests that the answer to inadequate computer-indexing is not sullen resignation but a drive for better programmers. Candy Schwartz reports on the 1983 American Society for Information Science conference; theme, 'Productivity in the Information Age' (proceedings available). 'Question and Answer' discusses the differing specificity-levels required for back-of-the-book and electronic entries. 'Electronic Shoebox' analyses the results of ASI's survey of Microcomputer Use, and hopes to publish details of the 'surprising' use of hitherto unknown or individually developed programs; Linda Fetters is also able to report on new features added to Compugramma and Foxon Maddocks programs. We have the results of the survey on Indexer Economics: a most elegant and comprehensive analysis of the work-patterns and earnings of both freelance and in-house indexers.

No. 65 is much concerned with the Electronic Publishing Project, set up to 'develop guidelines and standards for markups of manuscripts by authors and other persons having to do with final publication. One proposal is for authors to tag words in the text that might be used for indexing'. ASI is now a 'designated stakeholder' and will in consultation with its members present its views to the Project's National Review Board as various aspects of the Project are considered. ASI is trying to establish indexers as 'authors' rather than as 'processors' or 'services'. The Society's indexer-education committee is to survey the whole 'what when and where' of indexing education; and a liaison officer has been appointed to help chapters with their programs and problems. In addition the Board has empowered the President to 'select, appoint or hire' an administrative assistant.

The 1983–4 Register (free to those listed, $5 to other ASI members, $10 to non-members) contains details of 320 indexers plus four indexes—by state, special services, subjects indexed and special materials indexed. The American National Standards Institute is reorganizing: Standards relating to indexes, citations and machine-readable files will now be dealt with by an independent National Information Standards Organization. The Inindex program, with built-in word-processing capabilities, is described in detail; the Wilson Award criteria are published; and the issue begins the publication, state by state (Alaska to most of Colorado here) of ASI's membership list, planned for completion within a year's five issues.

Dorothy Thomas opens no. 66 with some encouraging presidential news and views on chapter development ('ASI is growing West'). She suggests that 'regional' (as opposed to 'city') chapters, with their widely scattered populations, may solve their communication problems by issuing a local newsletter and holding one annual meeting with a special focus: 'It is vital for indexers to talk with each other ... That is the element that makes regional chapters essential and viable'. 'Question and Answer' had conducted a small, informal survey of editors: 'They don't find their indexers, they already have them'; they have come mostly from recommendations, or from individuals' letters of application. Editors looked for 'experience, quality, efficiency, reliability, intelligence, the ability to meet deadlines. Subject area knowledge and reasonable fees were the least important factors'. ASI is increasing its subscription (by $5 to $30) for the first time in five years; they calculate that two-thirds of this goes largely on publications {The Indexer and Newsletters). The highest-ever number of submissions for the Wilson Award has been received (20+). The Powertext program is described; as is a specialized word-processor called Index Compiler. As so often, a further program is needed for underlining, sub/superscripts, special sorts etc. The art of abstracting by Edward T. Cremmins is well reviewed (perhaps this correspondent should invest in a copy).

Through the three issues runs the exuberant rhetoric of Hans Wellisch's castigations of a certain kind of computer-generated index (mostly the products of one particular publishing-house). His targets include the uncontrolled reproduction of variant spellings and printers' literals from original sources, undifferentiated references, space (and purchaser's money) wasted on reproducing the unused parts of catalogue cards, pre-coordinated subject-heading lists 'applying the rules of the 19th century to late-20th-century information-retrieval', the so-called specialist dictionaries whose entries lead not to definitions but to the (often
A cumulative index nears completion. The front page of each issue (devoted generally to ‘policy’ matters) carries a box telling you where the Contents list may be found (usually page 2) and nowadays there is an Index to each issue too (after a brief appearance near the middle, it seems to be settling on to the back page). This index rearranges the twelve to twenty Contents items in alphabetical order, but that’s about all. On the whole, if the topic you want to trace is not in the title of an article (and a great many titles are identical from issue to issue—Electronic Shoebox, ASI Profile)—you might just as well have used the Contents list to begin with; in either case, you will probably have to settle down with your pile of back numbers and look right through them all. Far be it from this correspondent to discourage anyone from providing an index to anything; but I do hope that this (in principle welcome) innovation may in the future be a little more informative.

Two triumphs: the Golden Gate chapter held its first annual meeting; 120 members and guests turned up, and ASI gained many new members. And each of these three issues carries a cartoon, a delightful innovation; my own favourite depicts a dressing-gowned figure staring out of a window, thinking:

- breakfast
- coffee
- toast
- morning
- birds
- sunrise

Oh, and some publisher has had a mini-triumph: he has published some of his on-line data bases in print, on paper, and with the solemnity of a latter-day Caxton explains to his readers some of the advantages of this amazing medium. Thank you, kind sir; we’re very grateful to have been told that.

### Australian Society of Indexers
(Vol. 8, nos. 1, 2)

No. 1 summarizes a talk given on the accounting aspects of freelance work: the speaker explored the possibilities of various business structures—partnership, company, family trust; and treated in detail the various tax-deductible expenses that might be claimed. In Australia, a business doesn’t make a home a commercial establishment unless it annoys the neighbours. (Well, I dare say few shoeboxes are a major source of environmental pollution; it’s good to feel we are making our little contribution to the ecological movement.) The information is comprehensive, and most of it must be applicable in other countries where indexers have their habitats; certainly we should all bear in mind that it is worth adopting ‘a creative approach’ to taxation, rather than seeing it negatively as a duty or an evil, and that record-keeping on everything, all the time, is vital. Also—the bane of the self-employed everywhere—tax-inspectors are inconsistent in their policy and the way they apply it, from person to person and from year to year; so make the claim, be prepared to back it with documentation, and hope.

The *Australian art index* (*AARTI*, naturally), begun in 1982, proceeds steadily; it covers Australian visual arts and artists (both facts and bibliographic data) extending beyond the traditional fine and decorative arts to photography and the design aspects of theatre and architecture. It is at present online to private subscribers; when complete it will be publicly available. The Information Management and Consulting Group in Australia has produced a *Directory* of its members, who include some indexers (the Group, a special interest group of the LA A, brings together ‘skilled professionals who are involved in information work on consulting or contract terms’). AusSI is negotiating with the Society of Editors for the inclusion of Registered Indexers in their *Register of freelance publishing services*; some freelance editors offer indexing services, but AusSI members listed will be RIs only (‘quality-controlled!’) ‘in accord with the Society’s policy of phasing out their list of freelance indexers’.

No. 2 carries the reports of the 1984 Annual General Meeting: membership has risen to 137 (from 98); there is growing recognition among publishers of indexing as a skilled profession; spontaneous moves are taking place among Sydney members to found a group in that area; two further indexing courses had been held; and the
balance sheet shows the financial position to be healthy. A summary is given of a talk on the basic problems of book supply in Australia and on the Joint Standing Committee for the Book Trade. This summary of some interesting material and projected action may appeal particularly to other countries which share Australia’s great dependence on overseas suppliers. AusSI is asking its members to contribute their views and individual policies on fees for indexing; ‘should the Society endeavour to set a benchmark or to represent general practice?’

To mark Victoria’s 150th anniversary the gap in the Argus newspaper index (which extends from 1859 to 1909) is to be filled. Volunteers are invited to read and briefly précis runs of the Argus, in units of a week (which is expected to mean about one-and-a-half days’ work) for later indexing by a professional indexer. We learn also that CONSER (the Conversion of Serials project) is to be enriched with the addition of abstracting and indexing coverage.

Both issues carry the regular ‘Book reviews—Indexes mentioned’ feature. You may be glad to know that the Australian encyclopaedia at last (4th edition) has an index; less glad that—presumably for ease of future updating—reference is to code and section, rather than volume and page. You must therefore for instance seek one reference to ‘pigeons’ under PIG020, instead of 8:49. (There must be a method, of equal utility to the editors, which is less cumbersome to the user.)

Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada/Société Canadienne pour l’Analyse de Documents
(Vol. 6, no. 4)

In this issue, registration materials, voting papers and so on are included for the Annual General meeting. There is also a most welcome visual aid in the form of a pie-chart: Where Your Membership Dollar Goes (other societies please copy?). It may be noted from this that, as with ASI (see above), approximately two-thirds is spent on publications. We are pleased to see that the ‘Treasurer reported a healthy balance’. There is an excellent and comprehensive summary of points made by a recent speaker on using a microcomputer, firstly to create an index, secondly to create a data base. The processes are clearly described and the differences analysed. The Bulletin also contains a useful bibliography of articles dealing with Computers and Indexing published in The Indexer, April 1979 to October 1983. One title causes me to wonder whether the new technology may be older than I thought: ‘Computer-assisted production of bibliographic data bases in history’! A totally acceptable version of ‘convict indexing’ is provided by the students of a Quebec indexing course who are making an index for Those amazing people: the story of the Canadian magazine industry 1778–1967.

A magnificent letter is reproduced from the New York tribune of October 27 1860, signed by ‘Bibliophile’, deploring the publication of learned books without indexes: ‘... an indication of mental obliquity upon the part of authors and publishers... which already worked incalculable evil in the Republic of Letters, and threatens to work more... what would be thought of an architect who built a large house and left it without staircases for exploration? What, then, shall be said of an author or publisher who sends a book into the world without an Index?’ (Well, of course, such things couldn’t happen nowadays.)

The issue reproduces in full an address given to the 1983 Halifax meeting entitled ‘The Museum Information Reserve: Access and Expectation’. This very interesting paper explores changing attitudes to the functions of museums, which are themselves concrete indexes, and changing approaches to the cataloguing of their contents, which may include concepts as well as artefacts. ‘Even as the application of computer technology transformed the cataloguing of objects, by suggesting possibilities for documenting that were previously not seen or could not be accommodated in any manual system, the development of a conceptual framework which suggests links between objects, narratives and other sources of information, as well as place and time, will transform the potential of the information reserve into an active resource.’ Stirring stuff—for curators and for information scientists (even the shoebox kind).

Society of Indexers
(January 1984; no. 2, 1984 (Spring))

The Secretary reports in January on the successful Seminar held for Registered Indexers (though ‘of course it came up with ten new questions for every one it answered’). Non-RIs are assured that their position will be ‘deeply thought on’ and invited to contribute their views. Nominations are requested for the 1983 Wheatley Medal. A (slightly less illustrious) prize is offered in the annual small competition—entry limited to those whose subscription is paid up by the due date. And bless my soul, there’s a long extract from a member’s poem: I quote:

... We are the unsung heroes of the information trade, And we have an uphill struggle if we want to make the grade...
Now A is for the Authors on whom we all depend;
B is for the Books they write: of them there'll be no
end.
C is for Computers that should help us be efficient;
D is for the Deadlines . . .

How delightful if the lyric Muse could speak more often
in the pages of our Newsletters. Cartoons, pie-charts,
poems—whoever thought we were a lot of fuddy-
duddies?

No. 2, a more sober issue, begins by announcing the
death of Monty Harrod. There is a note from SI's librar-
ian that the SI library is under-used, and from the
Council that the minimum recommended hourly rate is
increased (by 25p) as from 1 June. The Secretary asks for
more supervisors to help student indexers who have
reached a certain stage of proficiency; the supervisor
lends the student a set of proofs of a book he/she has
recently indexed, the student indexes them, the super-
visor assesses the index on the basis of his/her familiarity
with the text. (The Registrar remarks, 'This is a good
exercise in self-criticism—and you'll be paid £18 into the
gain'.) The publication of *Indexers available* (now
going into its 3rd edition) has begun to take effect:
indexers report more commissions, publishers show
more awareness; the Secretary asks for the names of
individual editors known to members since 'copies sent
to publishing houses, even at their own request, are not
always landing on the right desks'.

Readers with a taste for chronological coincidence
may like to know that this Newsletter was dated 23 April
1984; and that this was Easter Monday, Shakespeare's
420th birthday, St George's Day, and the Secretary of
SI's birthday to boot.

J.L.B.

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**The business of computer-aided indexing**

Richard Raper

KWIC, KWOC and other automatically generated
indexes were popular when new. They still have a place in
information storage and retrieval: but they may produce
poor, voluminous indexes ill-suited for most books or
journals because of their non-selective presentation of
undigested information. By contrast a human-computer
partnership can overcome these disadvantages as use of
the computer's speed for manipulating data is combined
with the indexer's skill in selecting entries.

1983 was a golden year for UK indexers with several
new computer program packages coming onto the
market. Faced with a large indexing project, I sought a
system comprising microcomputer, disk drive, display
screen and printer. I chose MACREX software as it
operates in CP/M for use with disks. A disk system for
data storage was preferred to tape storage because of its
greater speed of operation and easy location of stored
data.

Assessing cost and running expenses, I found that the
whole set-up would require an outlay of between £1500
and £4000. With 80 new systems introduced in the UK in
1983, probably even more in 1984—which to choose?
The cheapest may have not enough RAM capacity, or
have too small disk stores; the dearest are wonderful
machines but with huge capacity unlikely to be fully used
for most indexing projects. I needed a micro that would
work in CP/M, have 64-kilobytes RAM and twin disk
drives each with at least 300Kbyte storage capacity.
Many 5½" disks will store this amount of data; but I did
consider using 8" disks with capacity of 1 Megabyte or
1000Kbyte each. I chose an 8-bit computer rather than
16-bit as the former served my needs and software for the
latter was not then available. I selected an 8-bit NEC PC
8001B system, for two reasons: its supplier was local (an
important point when there are operation problems),
and its cost was reasonable while it was still capable of
doing the job required. The basic cost, including appro-
priate wordprocessor software as well as that for
indexing, was nearly £2400. To this were added extras for
a maintenance kit, spare disks, taxation and other
contingencies. I made provision for an outlay of £3000,
which proved sufficient. Repayment of the principal,
plus interest over two years, meant a weekly overhead of
£40. (Some eleven months later repayments are on
schedule from earned revenue.) Anyone venturing into
purchase of a computer-aided indexing system is well-
advised to work out their sums carefully in advance.
Have you sufficient business to justify such an outlay,
and can you repay it in the time allocated?

Another word of caution: do not buy a computer and
expect to complete an index two weeks later. Allow at
least two clear weeks to become familiar with it and the