Society of Indexers
(nos. 1/86, 2/86; MicroIndexer 5)

No. 1 (January 1986) follows the Society's AGM, at which the Chief Executive of the Library Association had been the guest speaker; he had mentioned in passing that the LA was to be styled in future the Library and Information Association (LIA) an innovation which might well cause acronymic embarrassment to its journal, the . . . Record. SI itself, after five years of financial sufficiency and an unmoving subscription, now approached actual embarrassment; subscriptions (and Indexer cover prices) were to be raised and a long list of planned retrenchments was announced. Entries were requested for Indexers available (there is a small charge for an entry, and non-Registered indexers must offer some proof of training and/or experience as an earnest of good intent). The names of six newly-Registered indexers were listed, with details of the books submitted for assessment. The Wheatley Medal nominations were due, and the first plans sketched for the 1987 Conference. In the Letters column two distinguished indexers agreed that it was desirable for indexers to read their proofs; that they should, as 'authors', not charge directly for this; that the task was necessary, whatever the inconvenience, 'for the sake of the standard of our published work' and 'to see the job through'.

No. 2 (April 1986) invites members to pay a group visit to the London Library (a subscription library held in both reverence and affection by its many members) following a talk on the Library given to SI members earlier in the year. John Gordon, whose years as Secretary, then Chairman, now a Vice-President of SI had made him into an institution, was moving to Northumberland. The Society's minimum recommended hourly rate was to be raised, and members were advised to check on publishers' payment schedules before accepting commissions, and if necessary to stipulate payment within a stated period. A document, 'Counsel's opinion on copyright', was to be made available to members at £1 per copy; members were invited to subscribe to a new magazine designed to forge links between workers at home; nominations were invited for the AusSI indexing medal; and no letters were submitted for publication. 'Is there,' asks the editor, 'anyone out there?'

The editor of MicroIndexer 5 mentions the comfort of 'middle-distance glasses' for micro-users. The issue (with fewer pages but more closely-spaced text than the previous issue) contains a report on a journal-publishers' seminar on computerized indexing, including two programs used for referee-control; some notes on the possible health hazards of VDUs; a full description of the Mirabilis program for text retrieval, which includes four types of index; another lively piece from Ann Hall on alternative uses for micros; 'In Pisa, someone is reputed to have ascertained the height of the leaning tower by dropping a computer from the top and timing its descent . . .'; a report from the 9th International Online Meeting; and a report of an SI members' meeting at which the latest developments of Book Machine (an authors' and publishers' micro) were displayed. As befits end-matter, the indexing developments have lagged behind other parts of the system: the author of the article feels that with all Book Machine's virtues, the indexing arrangements 'represent the shape of things to come but not yet arrived'.

J.L.B.

Copies of newsletters or single items mentioned in this feature may be available on application to the secretary of the society concerned; see addresses given at the end of this journal.

A glossary for indexers VI

licensure to practise: permission given to contributors to multi-author medical works to use as many different terms for identical objects, states, or concepts as it seems expedient; rigour, scientific.
praise, uneared: normally awarded by inexperienced authors. Example: 'So you go through the book and find all the important words beginning with A, and so on. That's really impressive.'

proofreader: underpaid hack employed by publisher to correct printers' errors in main text of book; endmatter, including the index, may, or may not, receive hasty attention from the third typist on the left. Note: there are honourable exceptions to this neglect of index-proofreading.

proofreader, printer's: underpaid polymath shut up with a bottle of green ink to preserve authors, copy-editors and indexers from exposure to ridicule by scholars, normally-literate human beings, etc. Endangered species.

Temps, perdu, recherche du: acute malaise affecting indexers immediately after completion of an index ready to type; the principal symptom is a sensation of urgent need to revise radically. The affliction is temporary; however, the discomfort may be eased by single-minded attention to: imminence of deadlines; totally inadequate space/time/fee allowed anyway by wretched publisher. Many sufferers have obtained lasting relief by making resolutions, repeated as necessary, to Do Better Next Time.

J.L.B.

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