American Society of Indexers
(no. 79/80)

A combined issue, rescheduled to include various matters of constitutional importance to ASI members, this Newsletter of January/February 1987 maintains the outward-looking vigour to which we are accustomed. The 'What's New' section begins with a review of Dictionary of library and information sciences, English-Chinese/English. The larger section comprises English terms and their definitions, in parallel with their ideographic equivalents (I propose to get out my brush and ink to practise the symbols for 'index' which are here displayed in facsimile, first alone then marching down the page at the head of various compounds); the second section has three parallel lists, of Pinyin, ideographic and English equivalents of terms only (the Pinyin romanization of the ideograph for 'index' is 'suoyín'). Other reviews reveal an index published by the American Library Association in which the whole 'I' letter-group has been omitted ('ALA's editors, indexers and proof-readers ... should be ashamed of themselves') and the second edition of Neufeld and Corgn's Abstracting and indexing career guide.

'Electronic Shoebox' reviews 'In>Sort', a new low-cost indexing program which Linda Fetters considers 'a bargain for the occasional indexer or for a professional indexer who does not need to make entries longer than the 154 character limit'. Also discussed in great detail is the MIS program; it was only when checking that this was not—as I thought it might be, given this Newsletter's way of scattering its continuation-pages about like cherry-blossom in a Spring breeze—a further part of 'Electronic Shoebox', that I noticed the decoratively inconspicuous heading 'Advertisement' across the top of the page. Announced, but neither reviewed nor advertised as yet, is 'Cindex'.

Linda Cooper provides a useful list of books for those setting up in business for themselves, and Peter Lennie a valuable set of guidelines on the buying of computer hardware; I noted in particular the need to distinguish between levels of compatibility (DOS, BIOS and complete) and to exploit fully the wide choice now available—Mr Lennie's conclusion seems to be that paying for the best, and for the greatest capacity you might ever need, is likely to be a worthwhile investment. Letters mention the existence of the Documentation and Information Center, League of Arab States, Tunis (of value perhaps for those indexing Islamic newspapers), and of the availability of the awaited Association of American Publishers' Standard for the preparation of electronic manuscripts. And it is once more time to submit your super-index for the Wilson Award (full conditions and criteria published in this Newsletter).

Australian Society of Indexers
(Vol. II, no. 1)

This issue (of February 1987) is dominated by an Annual Report detailing pleasantly satisfying achievement and expansion. Membership numbers had increased; meetings had included, as well as talks, a wide-ranging workshop which had proved very successful; two short courses had been held, with new formats being explored; four new names had been added to the Register of Indexers and it was hoped that many more would seek inclusion; a list of indexing-related courses was being compiled; and 'after long and sometimes agonizing deliberations' a new logo had been unveiled and was now in use. [See above] The only 'negative' element in the Report is the statement that no AusSI Medal had been awarded in the second year after its foundation, but an insistence on outstanding quality must be seen as a most positive position, to be welcomed and emulated. Entries are invited for the next one.

The project to index the Argus newspaper with the help of teams of volunteers has already been noted in these columns; the Newsletter prints some impressions by one of the volunteers of the Argus in the 1860s—an evocative mosaic of land-settlement and industrial reform, horseback daredevils and Sabbath observance, set in the journalese of its day.

Extracts from two book-reviews provide contrasting views of 'catching learning by the tail'. Hammond Innes had refused to allow his book on East Anglia to be indexed: 'If you have an index all people do is turn to that and look up where they live... and they never read anything. If you don't have an index then you start reading'. The reviewer concludes that he was right. However, a reviewer of Maureen Minchin's Food for
thought observed: ‘...if you don’t want to read the whole book, the index is a big help’. (Fellow-indexers, What are we for?...)

IASC-SCAD

Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada
(Vol. 9, nos. 1, 2, 3)

The first of these Newsletters (November 1986) announces that a ‘Canadian institution’, the Canadian periodical index, is to be taken over (from the Canadian Library Association) by InfoGlobe—a move which will continue to cause perturbation among Canadian indexers concerned for the durability and quality of the index and for their own futures. There is a description of the Western Canada Pictorial Index, a picture library particularly valued for its ‘willingness to duplicate unique photographs, returning the originals to their sources’; in addition, original photographic work is undertaken to enhance the collection. The Ottawa group had heard a talk on indexing in the Canadian House of Commons: ‘...many MPs wanting to know, in summary, what they may have said in the house’; ‘from the standpoint of the players of the game, there is perhaps even more interest in seeing their names noted than in knowing there is proper subject access’. After a useful bibliography of computer-related articles in The Indexer, the issue concludes with a revised version of Mary Dykstra’s 1986 AGM talk: ‘From Indexing to Automated Text Analysis: What Stands in the Way?’. Ms Dykstra had been researching PRECIS as a possible model for the process; she describes the methodology of the research as ‘sewing clouds together and hoping it would rain’. It did rain, but not in the expected ways—the conclusion of this logico-linguistic approach is that while PRECIS itself will not serve as a model for automated text-analysis, its classificatory basis in the ‘grammar’ of analysis and synthesis, syntax and thesaurus, may well be ‘the greatest legacy of PRECIS for the inevitable complex tasks which lie before us’.

No. 2 (February 1987) is short, but full of interesting meeting-reports, and carries the announcement of the next AGM, part of whose theme, ‘Indexing: Interests and Issues’ will take further the questions raised by the taking-over of Canadian periodical index and similar recent moves. PRECIS makes further appearances in reports of its use by ONTERIS (for educational research)—the speaker had observed that teaching PRECIS was an excellent way to teach principles of subject analysis; and by the National Film Board of Canada (for audio-visual materials)—the speaker pointed out that while the printed version of a PRECIS index was valued, the particular virtue of the online version was that every term is accessible. One of the meetings discussed is the visit of Ann and Gary Hall to Susan Klement’s house under the title: ‘Visitors from England’; I hope it will be of help to too many English ones, to mention that Scotland (where the Halls live) is a different part of Britain and in no sense part of England. Great Britain (yet another politico-geographical entity) consists of Scotland, Wales, etc., with England below and to the right...

The April 1987 issue is an extra one to carry ‘so much material yearning to go’. As well as full details of the forthcoming AGM, to be held in London, Ontario (I believe England has stolen itself a London, along with so much else), there is a report of Peter Greig’s talk on indexing manuals from 1876 to the present day; a checklist of the books discussed is available (4C$ from IASC/SCAD). There is an overview of Canadian newspaper indexing; notice of the Canadian library microcomputer directory; reviews of two books on PRECIS (respectively written and edited by Mary Dykstra) which offer the information that the system is being adapted to the totally different syntactical structure of Chinese; and a review of the 11th edition of the Thesaurus or ERIC descriptors. The main article is a description by Timothy Craven (abridged from a case-study in his book String indexing) of his use of his own system, NEPHEIS, for a cumulative index to the Canadian Journal of Information Science (the acronym refers to ‘nested phrases’). The account is given added interest by its discussion of the different formatting problems of the French and English versions of the index.

Society of Indexers
(nos. 1/87, 2/87; MicroIndexer 7)

The January 1987 issue is able to report that the recently founded Scottish Group is rising strongly from its foundations: a second meeting had been held, and a booklet of Indexers available in Scotland had been produced, as had a great deal of consciousness-raising in the Scottish book world.

Members’ meetings had dealt with self-marketing (‘dreams of glory engulfed the audience’) and provided opportunities to assist at the presentation of the Wheatley Medal and at a witty pre-AGM talk by Dr Martha Jane Zachert of the US Medical Library Association. There had been some correspondence following earlier references to the paucity of topographical indexes to reference books; forthcoming meetings would cover music, and the indexing of public health education materials.
The Spring 1987 Newsletter brings more correspondence on topographical indexing; the interest shown prompts the Editor to propose a members' meeting on the subject. There is a happy international linkage: Cecilia Gordon, a long-standing member of SI whose visit to Australia, unkindly curtailed by a broken leg, had been mentioned with sympathy in the AusSI Newsletter, replies with an open letter in which she thanks the Australians who had shown such friendly kindness and a 'welcoming warmth towards affiliates from abroad'.

Finally, the Newsletter announces that the Society of Indexers celebrates its 30th birthday this year, and asks for suggestions as to the form any festivities might take . . . If there ever was a sense in which the affiliated Societies were SI's children, they are certainly independent adults now; that's a festive thing in itself. We may all hope that the family of indexing societies may grow and grow from all its present bases.

The massive current presence of small, cheap Amstrad packages in the British word-processing/indexing field is reflected in MicroIndexer 7's designation of one third of its space as 'Amstrad Pages'; this is apparently expected to be a regular feature (not that Amstrads don't pop up elsewhere in the magazine too). Paul Barnett writes about replacement keyboards (and replacement stick-on letters). Tom Hunter describes his method of indexing with a pCW8256 'Joyce' model plus some cards and a few wrinkles of his own. D. C. Tyler supplies a helpful review of the PC1512; and the Editor reminds readers that the feature relies on the personal experiences of readers—contributions please.

This is good solid stuff, but there is much more. The NEC portable computer is described, with grace and effectiveness, by Drusilla Calvert; her verdict is favourable and she offers as a bonus the announcement of two packages in the British word-processing/indexing field that is reflected in MicroIndexer 7's designation of one third of its space as 'Amstrad Pages'; this is apparently expected to be a regular feature (not that Amstrads don't pop up elsewhere in the magazine too). Paul Barnett writes about replacement keyboards (and replacement stick-on letters). Tom Hunter describes his method of indexing with a PCW8256 'Joyce' model plus some cards and a few wrinkles of his own. D. C. Tyler supplies a helpful review of the PC1512; and the Editor reminds readers that the feature relies on the personal experiences of readers—contributions please.

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