Know your friends

This issue includes reports of meetings of other societies with whom indexers who were present found much in common. There are many such associations, whose aims and interests at some points coincide with those of our societies of indexers—expressed opposite as 'the promotion of the role of indexers in the organization of knowledge, and of standards and techniques for all forms of indexing'. Such societies are as profuse and dispersed as are publications noticing indexing, surveyed in our last issue.

Freelancers and homeworkers, prone to isolation and exploitation, need to assemble both for social reasons—meeting colleagues, discussing common problems—and to unite in their attempts to achieve decent professional conditions: training, qualifications, pay rates, contract terms. For these reasons Norman Knight in 1957 initiated SI; and for the same reasons many similar societies have been started likewise; some now well established, new ones still coming into being. The Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP) is flourishing after its first year, with 'the twin aims of promoting high editorial standards and achieving recognition of the professional status' of its members; newer yet, the International Society for Knowledge Organization was founded in Frankfurt in July 1989, with one of its aims, 'fruitful collaboration in the field of classification, indexing and knowledge organisation'.

Who are indexers' colleagues? Under the British Copyright Act 1988, we hope we are regarded as the authors of our works and accorded authors' legal rights. Certainly it is authors with whose products we are most immediately concerned. (The clearest image of the relationship seems to be of our gently chiding authors for their presumption as we take the index-pen from their fingers or interpolate ourselves between them and their index-programmed keyboards.) Authors and indexers alike deplore the contractual liability—textual and financial—of authors for index provision. The Society of Authors, which 'represents, assists and protects authors', should be our close colleague. Then, we certainly are employed by publishers, and should have close liaison with them. Our masters assemble in the Publishers Association and the Independent Publishers Guild. Most of us work at home—there is 'Ownbase', the network for all varieties of home-based workers, founded by Chris Oliver in Dorset. The majority of indexers are women; Women in Publishing exists 'to promote the status of women in publishing'. For those working on computers and increasingly concerned with new technology of information retrieval, the Institute of Information Scientists aims 'to raise the profile and status of information science as a profession ... by promoting high standards of information work ... and by encouraging contacts'.

Other societies share indexers' fundamental concerns with text analysis and information presentation. Two send representatives to the Council of SI: Aslib (The Association for Information Management), which 'promotes the concept that information is a corporate, organized and social resource requiring the development and use of specialist skills'; and The Library Association, which 'promotes bibliographical study and research'. Looking outwards, SI sends representatives to the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, the British Standards Institution Committees concerned with documentation, and the National Forum on Bibliographic Standards. The British Standards Institution Technical Committee responsible for the revision of BS 3700:1988 on indexing consisted of representatives of—besides SI—Aslib, the Association of British Directory Publishers, the British Library (Humanities and Social Sciences), British Telecom, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, INSPEC, The Library Association, Oxford University Press, and the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries. Many specialist indexers also have their particular professional associations.

Our societal circle is large. We exchange complimentary publications with many institutions. In the UK these are, or we receive—ALPSP, The Arts Council, The British Library, The British Standards Institution, Catalogue and Index, Cimtech (The National Centre for Information Media and Technology), The Commonwealth Institute, the Centre for Research in User Studies, the Independent Publishers Guild, The Office of Arts & Libraries, The Office for Humanities Communication, The Society of Authors, and SFEP. Overseas, we exchange with the Council of Europe's Documentation Centre for Education in Europe and the Fédération Internationale d'Information et de Documentation; the International Labour Office; Unesco; China's National Library and Library of Academia Sinica; France's Documentaliste; Germany's International Classification; Italy's Asso-
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ciazione Italiana Biblioteche and Centro Informazione e Documentazione Automatizzate; Canada's Secretary of State Translation Bureau; and in the USA, the American Library Association, the Council on Library Resources, Information Retrieval and Library Information, Libraries Unlimited, Library Resources & Technical Services, the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services ("Comprises over 70 of the world's leading information organizations. Its purpose is to serve the information community through education, research, and publication"), Science Associates International, the Special Libraries Association, and the UN Terminology Unit. Sets of the publications mentioned are to be found in the SI library, housed at The Library Association, London.

We have many professional friends; indeed, the sixth of the seven aims expressed in SI's constitution is, 'To promote between indexers, authors, publishers, librarians and other interested persons and organizations such relationships as may be conducive to the advancement of good indexing'. But SI, ASI, AusSI, IASC, and the Japanese Association of Indexers remain the only societies of indexers pure and single-minded, concentrating and focusing directly upon the principles and practice of indexing itself.

Coming events

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17–19 May  Aslib Electronics Group’s 32nd Annual Conference. Papers on: intelligent networks, practical fractals, liquid crystal displays, TV broadcast technology, guidelines for the selection of library software, performance indicators for information services, and links between information and innovation. Danbury Park Management Centre, near Chelmsford, Essex. Info: Diane Richards, 6 The Hollies, Shefford, Beds.

9–14 June  Special Libraries Association annual meeting. Pittsburgh, USA. Info: SLA, 1700 18 St NW, Washington DC 20009, USA.


18–19 July  Library Technology Fair, exhibition and conference. Hatfield Polytechnic, Hatfield, Herts. Info: W. A. Forster, Hatfield Polytechnic Library, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AB. Tel. (0707) 279665.


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Indexing and abstracting bibliography

We much regret to announce that the recent severe illness of Hans H. Wellisch, the sole compiler of our valuable current-awareness bibliography, means that we have for the present no further instalment of this. We send our very best wishes to Professor Wellisch for a full and speedy recovery, and our appreciation of the eight excellent parts that have appeared in the last two volumes of this journal.

Those wishing to locate material published on abstracting and indexing are referred to Library & Information Science Abstracts (LISA), as described in The Indexer 16 (1) April 1988, 11–16, or to the following abstracting journals: Current Awareness Bulletin (Aslib); International Classification (Indeks-Verlag, Frankfurt; now quarterly, and to be found in SI's library); Library Literature (Wilson, New York, 1933 to date); Library Science Abstracts (Heinemann, 1950 to date). All may be consulted in BLISS at the Library Association in Ridgmount Street, London W1.

Is it all worthwhile?

'When Dante Alighieri and Geoffrey Chaucer wrote, printing had not even been invented: copying was the trade of the professional scribe. Despite the lack of a copy-editor and a contemporary Max Perkins (the great editor—great? Can an editor be great?) . . . their works managed to survive into the Gutenberg age. Today's literary works do not manage to survive at all. They are remaindered heavily and sold to paperback firms with a massive, and destructive, turnover.'


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