The days of working without a written contract are almost over

Tim Klaver's review of the indexing functions of IBM INTERLEAF PUBLISHER opens no. 95 (November/December 1989). This seems to be a very desirable system overall, though too expensive and specialized for general indexing use; however, those who do much indexing of frequently updated material might like to explore an online indexing program which changes page-numbers automatically, deletes references to deleted pages, works out whether your cross-reference is a 'see' or 'see also' one, inserts volume/document titles for you, and altogether might save you and your publisher much time, heartache and even, perhaps, money.

The star of this issue is a project that will not save indexers any money, but may give its participants something they value more: ASI's Board has voted to encourage and co-ordinate the participation of ASI members in the San Francisco AIDS Foundation's newspaper indexing project. To have an expertise that one can donate to a good cause is always a matter of satisfaction, and ASI's fostering of the project can only be of benefit to indexers and indexing as well.

The President discusses the current financial difficulties in the US publishing industry and their effects on indexers; she suggests approaching non-industry publishers such as corporations and banks, and such organizations as the local Society of Technical Communication. In conclusion Ms Mulvany maintains that the industry is not 'falling apart', but that it is changing, and that indexers must change with it. For instance, 'the days of working without a written contract are almost over'; the Society's Recommended Indexing Agreement was being well received, and would shortly be available in its final form. She discusses also the option of filing for copyright; the standard form for this purpose is reprinted with some guidelines for filling it in. Linda Fetters reviews THESAURUS CONSTRUCTION SYSTEM, apparently 'a pretty handy program'. You have a choice between 'hierarchy' and 'complex network' systems, and (with the relevant software) can switch between TCS and your indexing program to check terms for entries; but you have to buy an expensive version to get enough space for adequate scope notes. ASI members are urged to seek out opportunities to speak on indexing to everyone from schools to publishers' organizations; ASI will help with ideas and materials. ANSI is revising the 1984 Indexing Standard; the Software Library would like Apple Macintosh users to help with program evaluation; the Golden Gate chapter is holding a Midwinter Conference where the speakers are to be index-users; a transcript is available ($15 to non-members) of ASI's Conference panel, Freighters on indexing; and the back-page announcement of the AGM has a jolly picture to catch the eye (as the back page is also the verso of the mailed form of the Newsletter, perhaps the postman will come too).

ASI is on the phone

Hypertext is back to start off no. 96 (January/February 1990)—a nice meaty review by Ty Koontz of PC-HYPERTEXT (to follow up the description of TEXTPRO in no. 94). This is a very powerful and complex program; I was comforted to read that navigation of the whole archipelago of files can be achieved by simple use of the four arrow-keys. The Software Library offers examples of hypertext in action for the use of ASI members, all created using PC-HYPERTEXT. A Board meeting is reported on: a notable item was the approval of the Criteria for a Serial Indexing Award; sponsors for the Award were to be sought. In addition, ASI had established a Society telephone with answering machine, to be monitored for calls by two volunteers. (If you want to ring them up, it's (Washington DC) 202 328-7110.) As an extra course to all this open government, members could send for minutes of Board meetings, or attend the full-day meeting on the eve of the AGM. Golden Gate chapter members, dunned at a meeting, had handed over £161 towards postage and disk costs for the AIDS Indexing Scheme (see above).

'Electronic Shoebox' reviews CINVERT, a program to move formatted indexes to other software, primarily for the use of publishers/typesetters, or for merging into other already formatted indexes. If it seems somewhat complex for a tyro to use, Indexing Research, the originators, will perform the conversion for you ($20 for one file of up to 5,000 entries).

'Keywords tagged by computer software do not an index make'

No. 97 (March/April 1990) starts hearteningly with an
introduction to candidates for office and Board membership; each candidate had filled in a short questionnaire on their experience and views, and the answers are here printed out as an aid to informed voting. Among issues raised were: the current challenges from publishers’ financial stringency and/or from computer-generated indexes (‘Keywords tagged by computer software do not an index make’); the need to heighten awareness and to work to raise standards; and the great potential for public and private benefit of individual indexers, often seen as a much under-used resource (‘We are fortunate to have hundreds of members who choose to work in this field because we enjoy it!’). The whole collation of opinions and ideas is interesting enough to be made available to a wider readership; better yet if it could be used as a starting-point for discussions.

Some options for self-employed health insurance are canvassed; the AIDS project had been over-subscribed—a source of justifiable pride; Nancy Mulvany’s two trial filings for index-copyright had received inconsistent treatment from the Copyright Office; ASI was starting to plan for its silver anniversary in 1993 (goodness, how old and established we all are, and how pleasantly unset in our ways); and a new Editor was needed for the Newsletter (the current one suggests two editors, to cover respectively editorial and production functions. How refreshing that Nancy Mulvany—who does so much work for ASI on so many fronts—is willing to admit, as just one of her reasons for resigning, that she is ‘tired of producing this publication’). ‘Electronic Shoebox’ takes a side-by-side look at the latest versions (both 4.1) of MACREX and CINDEX; it is good that these two distinguished programs never rest on their laurels, and intriguing to note that a hypertext introduction to MACREX will be issued shortly.

A pioneering triumph: ASI’s standard contract, the Indexing Agreement, is finished and printed for the use of members, in the form of alternative general clauses to be deleted or modified to suit individual wishes and conditions (and differing state laws). With it comes ‘Attachment A’, which specifies times, rates, formats and other nitty-gritty for individual commissions. Under US law, a ‘work-for-hire’ agreement, hitherto used for less than 25% of indexing commissions, acts primarily as a limitation on indexers’ rights, whereas copyright at least is guaranteed by the absence of such a contract; it is hoped that the judicious uses of ASI’s new agreement will protect general rights (obviously vulnerable where there is no written contract) while not excluding copyright entitlement. If you like, rather than copying the agreement documents on to your word-processor yourself, you can get them on disk from the ASI Software Library and get started straight away on the customizing.

"ANSI should provide a new American indexing Standard"

The title of the cover-story in issue no. 98 (May/June 1990) is ‘Cookbook indexing: not as easy as ABC’—a conclusion with which we must agree. The article, too (reprinted from another journal, and apparently directed to the non-indexer), has plenty of lighthearted insights with which many of us might sympathize, whether or not we’ve ever indexed a real cookery book: the ‘index ... should not be an obstacle course that the user has to figure out on an empty stomach’; ‘there are rules ... but they are only guidelines’; ‘Eggplant should come between Egg and Zucchini and Eggs and Bacon, but ... I clump all the egg-dishes under Egg(s). [Such a decision] doesn’t qualify as high drama, but ... it makes my day’.

Some letters criticizing the subject-specialism categories used in ASI’s Register (too broad, too narrow, too unproven, too many) air common problems, and the Editor responds with spirit that the Society needs a volunteer to sort these problems, please. Frances Lennie reports on the UK Society’s Edinburgh Conference, with the new customary acknowledgment of the opportunities for indexers to talk at length with other indexers; ASI President Nancy Mulvany’s address to the Conference, ‘American indexers in the 1990s’ (‘beautifully delivered and thought-provoking’) is reproduced in this Newsletter as well as in The Indexer. For ‘Electronic Shoebox’ Linda Fetters has found something called the THE UNIVERSAL TEXT INDEXER—a title which ought to suggest the ultimate perfection, but in fact causes a sinking feeling (we have been here before ...); apparently the sinking feeling is justified. It is an online program for WordPerfect or ASCII files, and can do some clever things; but it cannot accept upper-case letters, or punctuation within words, or phrases more than thirty characters long ... Linda Fetters leans over backwards to find kind things to say, but has to admit that any stand-alone program would be faster and better, working from hard copy, and that if you must index online, VENTURA or INTERLEAF will allow you to make a better job of it. For once there is no criticism of the manual’s own index: it hasn’t got one.

Finally, Jessica Milstead, reporting on Standards, has recommended that ANSI should provide a new American indexing Standard, rather than adopt or adapt the draft ISO Standard, which is in her view ‘too limited ... hardly recognizing the existence of indexes that may be compiled after the fact of publication, and cover a collection of works. We do not need a standard for back-of-the-book indexes alone, particularly one which is not clearly labelled as such. In addition, the draft gives only a passing nod to the issues of database indexing ...’ Back to the drawing-board?
'The index to the User's guide is a misery'

Children's indexing had been explored in depth at an Ottawa meeting reported in Vol. 12, No. 1 (January 1990). The art of providing subject-access for children required subtlety, and involved more than just using 'bird-watching' rather than 'ornithology' [though surely the recommended replacement of 'toys' with 'leggo' [sic] is a little too subtle? On second thoughts, perhaps the Editor will commission a paper on the superiority over conventional, po-faced indexing information of the insights provided by the better class of literal, or by almost any accident of typography or layout]. Speakers had recommended the Wilson Children's catalog as a source of appropriate terms. Mention was also made of such bibliographic tools as Notable Canadian children's books! Un choix de livres canadiens pour la jeunesse (fully indexed by author, title, illustrator, prizes awarded, subject and theme) and a checklist: Indexes to children's literature: selected sources. The lack of coverage in indexing-manuals of children as users was deplored, and the 'creative challenge' of indexing for such users was welcomed. [It is good to know that the Ottawa Public Libraries Catalog names all seven of Snow White's dwarves.]

Another meeting, in Toronto, had explored indexing software in general, and given detailed coverage to MIS ('one of the first indexing software packages for micro-computers'); CINDEX ('there is very little, if anything, that CINDEX cannot do'); and ZyINDEX (which doesn't index at all—see below).

The Editor would like members to report on their experience of using modems, to note the date of the AGM, to send nominations for the Executive, and to remember that if they want an entry in the first issue of the Register without renewing their membership subscription they will have to pay $24 for the privilege. I believe this will be the only such publication which allows non-members to be represented at all; we shall be interested to see how the scheme develops.

As a supplement to this issue, Allen B. Veaner publishes a long review of ZyINDEX Professional, Version 3.0. This program provides, at great speed, a concordance of words used in an on-line document, with context. Documents in English, French or Spanish are accommodated; searching can be modified by the use of and, or or nor, and by such constraints as 'within five words' of a named term. For this version a hard disk and a large memory are required, but in return documents of considerable size can be handled. The documentation and on-screen instructions are excellent (though 'the index to the User's guide is a misery'). The review is filled with superlatives, but the program has some curious shortcomings, mostly to do with unreliable or nonexistent recognition of apostrophes, carriage-returns and hyphens; while synonyms supplied are idiosyncratically chosen (though you can add your own). Precious little use for indexing with, and perhaps not entirely satisfactory for its primary purpose of finding out where you mentioned West Germany in some letter long ago.

'The fallacy of displacement'

No. 2 (March 1990) reports on a meeting at which Toronto members heard about INTELLECT, a mainframe retrieval system which allows managers etc. to question it in natural language, courteously questions ambiguities in return ('Do you want: 1) state = New York; 2) city = New York') and has some ability to 'learn' its user's habits. Naturally the original lexicon must be meticulously put together, and monitored, for each organization using the program, but—at least for reasonably concrete data—it 'appears to offer impressive results that justify its extraordinarily high expense'. There is also an interesting summary of a paper by Gerard Salton on automatic book-indexing (manual indexes represent, he states, 'a major stumbling block in a book production system'). Salton experimentally produced automatic indexes for two chapters of his own new book; all he then had to do was condense the machine's 2,200 and 2,900 entries to 180 and 220 entries. As the Newsletter's Editor writes: 'There may be less here than meets the eye.' Having questioned the basis and conclusions of Salton's 'experiment', the Editor puts forward an interesting proposition of his own: the 'fallacy of displacement'. By this he means that 'new techniques supplement established ones and create new markets; they don't necessarily displace old ones'.

Abstracts and their kindred do a little celebrating in this issue: Cambridge Scientific Abstracts is thirty years old, and now runs international branches, forty research journals and ten online databases—a learned Colossus. International Aerospace Abstracts, only one year younger, has just published its millionth abstract; while Avery Architecture Index is now available on Diallog. Among these grand old men can be found a newborn infant which seems a prodigy of imaginative enterprise: 100 translators, with 50 abstractors, indexers and editors in the Philadelphia area, are abstracting Japanese technical journals to provide printed abstracts, an online database, and various other spin-offs, including a search...
service, all at remarkable speed (‘...and produced printed abstracts before some of their competitors had received their journals...’). The Editor would like his readers to discuss some issues in the payment for indexers, including such concepts as a ‘sliding scale, so that the beginning of a job is priced higher than later portions’, and a ‘quantity discount’, feedback from these should be interesting. He is finally to be congratulated on an excellent way to raise AGM-consciousness: each page of this Newsletter carries, as a running footer, a reminder of the date and place of the occasion; the last page of text has a fuller aide-mémoire in large type; and the detachable back page is a registration form.

‘Wheel discovered; inventor ignored’

No. 3 (May 1990) (out too soon to report on the AGM) continues the encouraging footers, with added urgency, and provides, as one individual’s response to the debate on indexing fees, a pleasant essay by Eve Gardner, who seems like many of us in this profession for gentlewomen to undercharge authors, ‘poor’ clients, and herself, while pushing the price up a bit for the big corporations; she is certain that many publishers have to have the realities of indexing presented to them before they are willing to pay the rates they gladly offer to editors. It is hoped that Gerard Salton (mentioned above), the guru of automatic indexing, will be able to talk to members before long. Finally, it is not only Canadians who will be sorry to hear that Peter Greig is resigning after many years from the IASC/SCAD executive; we hope that the distinctive voice of this most international of indexing personalities may still sound from time to time. It is he who contributes to this issue a reminder of Mortimer Taube’s long-ago, computerless, near-instant retrieval system (entitled: ‘Wheel discovered, inventor ignored’).

Society of Indexers
(Nos. 1/90, 2/90)

‘The creativity and human decision-making process involved...’

The Editor of SI Newsletters normally provides less an editorial than a brief billet-doux which manages to air a general issue amid graceful comments on the weather or the measles. For no. 1 (Winter 1990) she confides that she is considering establishing herself as a limited company, waiting only to find out whether such a move will enable great quantities of assets and activities to be claimed for, or against. Members are asked to attend meetings and conferences, and to renew their subscriptions; SI offers a somewhat reduced subscription for members over retiring age who are no longer practising indexers, still further reduced if they are also Founder Members. The Society’s occasional Carey Award for ‘services to indexing’ had been given to John Gordon (see The Indexer 17 (1), April 1990, 48–9). The well-attended AGM had offered a talk on last year’s conference on the island of Hvar (Yugoslavia), and the glad news that another one was planned, as well as British indexers’ views on 1992—a date of great but dimly-understood significance, being that of the formal interlinking of all EC countries in a free-trading agreement (or something); barriers will fall, sacred cows will be defenestrated all over the place, and British indexers seem sure, at least, that the only indexing society in Europe, West or East, so far, should be exercising some influence on standards.

A talk on Britain’s definitive English dictionary, the Oxford English dictionary (OED), had clearly given great pleasure and enlightenment: ‘As one member put it, John Simpson of the OED was alone worth the annual subscription’. The Editor seizes the opportunity to remind members: ‘Meetings are... for all of us. They work if you attend and show interest’, and to ask for suggestions for further topics. The Editor of The Indexer’s own article on the indexing of biographies had been taken by ASI’s President to use as ‘evidence of the creativity and human decision-making process involved in the writing of a proper index’ to her meeting with the US Copyright Office—there’s glory for you—while another member had produced a Bibliography of the writings about Thomas Hardy for the years 1970–77 (price £4.50). Readers’ attention is drawn to the Clover Indexes to newspapers and journals, with an unusual free-language structure; the Sunday Times had published an article calling for the abolition of upper-case letters; The Times had suggested an impossibly low hourly rate for indexing, and published a letter describing a ‘plea for adequate indexing as a load of tosh’. (Any publicity is better than no publicity?)

The index to, for or of the book?

No. 2 (Spring 1990) offers a treat in the form of a guided tour of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, as an aperitif to a later talk by the Gallery’s Keeper. Other Societies
may be interested to hear that SI has established reciprocal facilities with the more recently formed Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders, to announce each other's occasions, buy each other's books, and so on. 'An eminent member of the Society' would like to know 'whether we prepare indexes to or for books? And is the resultant product the index to, for or of the book?' Well now . . .

Mary Piggott, in the course of a talk on the author as indexer, introduced 'the peripatetic school of indexing' (you get a sheet of paper for each letter of the alphabet, and arrange them in a circle on the floor). The Editor apologizes humbly for mistakenly, in an earlier issue, moving the University of Waterloo from Canada to the USA. (When did Waterloo get moved from Belgium to Canada, though?) Someone has compiled a Murder guide to London: An A-Z of metropolitan atrocities, which apparently has excellent indexes of murderers and victims, and of places. (The infamous Dr Crippen lived but a few minutes from the venue for SI's meetings.) And a flyer for a certain index had proclaimed: 'What makes the index so useful and such a valuable tool is that it has been compiled by a safety engineer and not a librarian'.

I am silenced; the more so as MicroIndexer is undergoing a change of organization and no issue is to hand. We shall hope to have all the more to write of next time.

JUDY BACKETHEL

We regret that no AusSI Newsletters have been available for this issue of The Indexer. We hope to bring Australian news up to date in our next 'Shoebox, International' feature.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Press index review

I appreciate the publication of a review of my Cape Town English press index, 1874 which appeared in your April issue. The problem of overlapping entries and see also references to the same entry under the alternative heading is unfortunate. At the editing stage I attempt to weed out such instances but this is a massive cross-checking exercise and unfortunately some fish escape the net!

However, the reviewer is very much mistaken in stating that there are no subheadings in the index.

Subheadings are used under names of African towns and states. Where many subheadings are provided, covering several pages of index, the scheme of subheadings is announced in a block at the head of the entries: for example under Port Elizabeth (p. 499).

Subjects such as activities (e.g. farming, p. 210–11), crops and commodities (e.g. sugar, p. 625), minerals (e.g. diamonds, p. 165–8), ethnic groups (e.g. natives, p. 450–2), economically useful animals (e.g. horses, p. 303), houses of the legislature (e.g. House of Assembly, p. 304–7), and others, have been consistently subdivided.

While your reviewer ought to have seen this in the body of the index, she could hardly have missed an explanatory note about subheadings in the introduction (p. iii, paragraph 2).

I do hope this statement will correct a misapprehension.

PETER COATES
Observatory, South Africa

P.S. The reviewer suggests merging entries for fish and fishes. I doubt whether any indexer would choose a heading MUTTON AND SHEEP!

Our reviewer replies:

Mr Coates is quite correct in saying that there are subheadings in his index; my apologies for saying there weren't any. However, what I should have said in my review was: "Perhaps if subheadings had been better displayed and used . . . .". This is because the subheadings are not easily seen. They are indented in ordinary type with a line before making them look as though they are part of the line above.

This does not excuse my not seeing them, and I trust this apology and explanation will suffice. May I add that in certain circumstances, I might indeed use a heading SHEEP with entries to include MUTTON, LAMB, etc., and emphasise once again how endlessly fascinating newspaper indexes can be—foreign ones in particular. Who could resist the two articles under OSTRICHES: 'four-legged ostrich reported', followed by—'now a four-legged, four-winged ostrich reported'? (Though the story of the amputated leg that went walkabout you will have to read for yourself at Colindale!)

Geraldine Beare
Woking, Surrey

Editors' licence

Publishers, as we all know, each have their own style. This extends to preferences where there is a choice of