Obituaries

Con Banwell
1907–1990

Con Banwell, described in 1975 in the first issue of Butterworths Gazette as 'one of only five legal indexers in England', died on 13 June 1990 after a heart attack, in hospital for the first time in his 83 years. He was a working indexer right up to the time of his death, as well as an avid promoter and teacher of indexing skills.

Con Banwell joined the staff of Butterworth & Co., legal publishers, in 1940, and became Manager of their Tables Department and the first Father of the Chapel of their NUJ Chapel. He conducted the indexing module in Butterworths' induction course for some years. After retiring in 1972 he continued to work for Butterworths as a specialist legal indexer.

He joined the Society of Indexers in 1963, becoming a Registered Indexer, and in 1974 won the Wheatley Medal for the Consolidated Index to the fourth edition of the Encyclopaedia of forms and precedents. In 1974 his index to Halsbury's Statutes of England, 3rd edition, Vol. 46, was Commended by the Wheatley Panel. With Reg Hewitt, he wrote the classic, authoritative work on legal indexing, A practical guide to law indexing, published by Butterworths in 1977.

In a letter to The Indexer in 1981, he wrote, 'Since I compiled my first index, in 1940, I have done several hundred indexes, and never once have I typed one.'

Alexander Sandison
1914–1990

Society of Indexers member Alexander Sandison, known to his friends as 'Sandy', died on 10 April 1990 after collapsing from a heart attack while questioning the Abbey National chairman at a shareholders' meeting—doing, as Geoffrey Robinson of BSI wrote in a note to members of Technical Committee DOT/8, what he did best.

Sandy was a great fighter for causes. His activities as one of the leaders of AMAF (Abbey Members Against Flotation) achieved national publicity, but he also fought for many causes that should be close to the heart of indexers. He criticized the inadequate indexes to the Data Protection Register and established that there is no need for an indexer to register under the Data Protection Act if a computer is simply being used as a tool for index preparation and the computer-stored index is not being used for searching for information about an individual.

I first met Sandy in the late 1970s when he was in charge of classification at the then Science Reference Library of the British Library. He gave me much useful information to help in the preparation of a book on classification and indexing practice, and I found my conversations with him quite stimulating. More recently he made an enormous contribution to the work of BSI Technical Committee DOT/8 (Documentation terminology), which I chair, not least by undertaking single-handedly the first draft of the classification of terms. I have to confess that at first I occasionally found his many contributions to our discussions rather irritating, but I later appreciated the value of his search for perfection.

He also did much to oppose, in a most constructive manner, BSI's ill-considered Project DISC (Delivering Information Solutions to Customers through international standards), the implementation of which could mean the end of contributions to the work of BSI by professional associations like the Society of Indexers. He represented DOT/8 at several crucial meetings and put the case against DISC very effectively.

I will conclude this tribute by quoting from a letter I wrote to Sandy two months before his death:

Dear Sandy,
It really is time I wrote to you to thank you for the sterling work you have been doing on the appalling DISC project. I am most grateful for the copies of correspondence you have been sending me... I am even more grateful to you for your work on the classification of terms in BS 5408. I am sure that the other members of the committee will share my gratitude.

BSI Technical Committee DOT/8 will not be the same without him, but I hope that the standard, when published, will be a fitting tribute to his memory.

References


Ken Bakewell