Whom to recruit: employees or freelancers

10 July 1990, London; Independent Publishers Guild

This open meeting was addressed by one speaker representing freelances and another on behalf of employers in publishing.

Norma Whitcombe, Chair of the recently-established Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP), said that whereas formerly most freelances had in-house experience, many of today's generation had never worked in-house, and needed training. SFEP had been formed to counteract a sense of isolation among freelances and to encourage contact between freelances and publishers. She considered the advantages to a small publishing business of employing a freelance where the extra work was, for example, not enough to warrant an extra full-time member of staff; of a specialized nature; sporadic or concentrated at a particular time. Employing in-house staff cost two and a half times the person's salary, while using a freelance should cost only one and a half times the hourly rate paid to an employee: the publisher would save on holiday and sick pay, national insurance, office space and unproductive time (lunch-hours and other breaks), heating, lighting and training costs. Payment was simpler, and an unsuitable worker could be more easily discarded.

Publishers must ensure that freelance employment was on terms acceptable to the Inland Revenue and Department of Social Services, to whom self-employment appeared to be defined by the presence or absence of a 'master-servant relationship'; fixed hours, for example, might be construed as implying employee status. The freelance should be adequately briefed, given guidance on house style and practice, and receive feedback, positive or negative. SFEP offered no registration or accreditation scheme as yet, but did provide training, discussion and a basis for good standards and practice. The SFEP Directory, including details of over 250 members available for work, was due for publication at the end of 1990. The SFEP newsletter accepted advertisements for full-time, part-time or freelance workers. At least three names could usually be supplied in response to each request for freelances; training seminars were held, and seminars in specialized areas were planned.

Freelances were normally paid by the hour; rates varied widely, and publishers were advised to be flexible about payment in the interests of building up good relationships. If jobs were refused consistently, it might be that the rate was too low.

Beverly Waldron, production manager at John Murray, said that many specialist areas were best left to freelances; employing the right person for jobs such as illustration, publicity, jacket design or picture research made for variety and was often time-saving. Large projects could be more efficiently carried out over a short period by freelances than by in-house staff. Problems might include faulty liaison and communication; lack of company knowledge on the part of the freelance; and inconsistency of style. It might be worth while to appoint a manager to organize freelance work.

Recommendations were useful in finding a freelance. Applicants for work should pay attention to the presentation of their letter or c.v. Payment should be negotiable on both sides, and the aim should be to form a good working relationship with a team of regular freelances.

Questions from the floor revealed a keen demand for guidelines on pay, and Norma Whitcombe contended that the hourly rate for freelances should be higher than that for in-house staff. It could be difficult to estimate the time needed for a job until work had actually started, but in general freelances were believed to be honest about the hours they had put in.

Christine Shuttleworth

Tools of knowledge organization and the human interface

14-17 August 1990, Darmstadt; International Society for Knowledge Organization

The International Society for Knowledge Organization (ISKO) was formed when a group of German and non-German members of the German Society for Classification met in Frankfurt on 22 July 1989. Its aim is to unite experts from all countries of the world in the field of conceptual organization of knowledge by classification, indexing, systematic terminology, concept analysis, etc. in the promotion of research, development and application of all methods for the organization of knowledge in general, or of a special area, by integrating especially the conceptual approaches of classification research and artificial intelligence. To hold an international conference only a year after the formation of the Society may be regarded as a tremendous act of faith, and the undoubted success of the conference was due in no small
measure to the tremendous efforts of the Society’s President, Dr Ingeatraut Dahlberg.

The Conference, held in Darmstadt, an attractive city 30 km south of Frankfurt, was attended by some 200 people from 23 countries—including Dr Wu Guang-Wei who had taken two weeks to travel overland from China. There were many international experts on classification and indexing, including, in addition to Dr Dahlberg, Hanne Albrechtsen (from Denmark), Tim Craven (Canada), Mary Dykslra (Canada), Douglas Foskett (UK), Robert Fugman (Germany), Masanobu Fujikawa (Japan), Alan Gilchrist (UK), M. A. Gopinath (India), Eric de Grolier (France), Charles Hildreth (USA), Brian and Alina Vickery (UK) and Nancy Williamson (Canada).

In her introductory remarks welcoming participants to the conference, Inge Dahlberg pointed out that Darmstadt is a cultural centre and a centre of critical minds—a reminder that we should never become lukewarm in our approach to our subject.

There were twelve plenary sessions and twelve workshops in four parallel sessions; 60 papers were presented in all. As in all conferences, the papers varied considerably in quality; I found rather too much emphasis on theory and too little on practice. There were, however, some very practical contributions, including Mary Dykslra’s study of the possibility of using PRECIS as a model in the design of an expert system for text analysis and retrieval, and Karen Markey Drabenstol’s survey of the development of online public access catalogues in the United States and her experiences of using the Dewey Decimal Classification as a subject searching tool in such catalogues. Charles Hildreth seemed unaware that it is possible to have multiple subject entries in catalogues.

Alan Gilchrist, in his paper on knowledge organization and the human interface, pointed out that IT systems, however well engineered, are useless unless people can actually use them! He lamented the lack of compatibility between hardware (for example, non-standard keyboards, printer interfaces and constraints of the monitor) and called for user-friendliness for database managers as well as end users. Error messages, he said, are often not merely unhelpful but incomprehensible, rude or threatening. In a paper on the integration of technology in the organization and dissemination of information, J. A. Boon of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, called for more sophisticated interaction between person (‘man’, as he put it!) and machine. He saw information systems as social systems using information technology.

Indexing workshop

I was one of only about a dozen participants at a workshop on indexing. This contained two useful and interesting papers (Claus Poulsen of the National Library of Education, Denmark, on ‘An indexing concept supporting subject access for innovation and creativity’ and Mirja livonen of the University of Tampere, Finland, on ‘The impact of the indexing environment on inter-indexer consistency’) and two very disappointing ones. Poulsen described ‘Paradoks Indexing’, a supplementary and alternative method to the ‘global’ subject indexing by classification systems, thesauri or free text. The method, which involves authors providing index terms via reviews, abstracts and contents tables of the documents concerned, owes something to the ‘Subject Access Project of Pauline (Atherton) Cochrane and her associates.’ livonen found that consistency between different indexers was low, due to a number of factors: the central aspect of the work was described in different ways; some indexers left the central aspect unindexed; some concentrated on peripheral themes; and some showed their own bias in indexing. The two disappointing contributions were both from India: M. Parameswaran of the Department of Library Science, University of Calicut, gave a paper on chain procedures and the Dewey Decimal Classification which could have been given forty years ago, and R. G. Prasher of the University of Saugar spoke on ‘Indexes and indexing’, making the astounding observation that book indexes are easy to construct. Naturally I challenged this during the all-too-short discussion period.

Summing up

The doyen of classification, Eric de Grolier (who will celebrate his eightieth birthday during 1991) summed up the proceedings magnificently. He referred to the limitations of computer-assisted information retrieval; the unfortunate emphasis on buildings rather than information systems, as seen in the new Bibliothèque de la France; the continued emphasis on online access to bibliographic information as opposed to what he called factographic information; the need for a new look at ‘full text’ as a basis for constructing better information systems rather than for direct retrieval; the merging of such topics as concept analysis, linguistic analysis, term associations and semantic associations; the influence of international organizations on information retrieval but with the emphasis on support for manufacturers of hardware like IBM rather than practical software; and gaps in research such as user studies and relationships across nations with attempts to link the Indian, French, British and American schools of classification and indexing. Like this writer, M. de Grolier was fed up with hearing the new buzz word ‘navigation’; instead of ‘navigating’ among OPACs (online public access catalogues), hypercards and computer screens, he asked, what about navigating in the real world—for example between library staffs and users?

My own main contributions to the conference were to chair one workshop, to give a ‘light’ after-dinner talk on
'humour in indexing' at Schloss Auerbach, and to participate as a panellist for the final session on 'Recommendations for knowledge organization in the '90s'. I used this to stress the importance of book indexes, so underestimated by a number of speakers, which represented knowledge organization at the level of the individual document, pointing out that Pauline (Atherton) Cochrane's BOOKS (or 'Subject Access') Project found that book indexes—when they existed!—had great value as retrieval tools because they allowed so many more approaches than does conventional classification. I also suggested that ISKO could usefully work with the indexing societies in Britain, Australia, Canada, the United States and Japan to lobby for an improvement in the number and quality of book indexes.

There were a number of exhibitions during the conference, including MACREX, and Drusilla Calvert and I took the opportunity to 'plug' the International Indexers' Conference to be held in Hvar, Yugoslavia, from 22–25 September 1991. Another exhibit of interest to indexers was the Bookhouse computerized system for fiction retrieval from Denmark. This allows retrieval of novels (adult or children's) by browsing pictures, browsing book descriptions, searching for books similar to a book description on the screen (using author or title for the initial search) or combining different keywords (e.g. topic, place, person, year). Details may be obtained from Riso National Laboratory, Systems Analysis Department, P.O. Box 49, DK-4000 Roskilde, Denmark.

The proceedings of the conference have been published in two volumes by Indeks Verlag of Frankfurt. A further demonstration of the excellent conference organization is that volume one of these proceedings, containing many of the papers and abstracts of most of the others, was presented to participants free of charge on registration.

References


Ken Bakewell

Ken Bakewell is a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of ISKO (the International Society for Knowledge Organization), and President of the Society of Indexers.

Copy into print: the shape of the next twenty years

17 October 1990, Cambridge; Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders' first annual conference

SFEP's first conference took place in Cambridge on a lovely autumn day, with four speakers plus a panel discussion at the end.

The first speaker was David Penfold of Edgerton Publishing Services, on the implications of the computer for the freelance editor. Predicting possible trends over the next 20 years was a difficult task, for technology changes so rapidly, but Mr Penfold gave a few pointers in the likely directions of change: improved communications; integration of TV, telephone, radio, etc.; non-paper publications to include on-demand publication; personal selection of information; hypertext; CD-I (interactive compact disk); multi-media publishing; improved quality; lower costs of hardware and software; and a breakdown of publishing organizations and functions.

The computer was also discussed—what it can and can't do, and what it will or perhaps won't do. And, of course, the problems of dealing with a multitude of different types of hardware and software. It was generally agreed that coding as it affected word processing, styles, typesetting and so on did not appeal to freelancers because of the different ways of doing things for different publishers and printers.

The second speaker was Kathleen Lyle, freelance editor and SFEP Northern group organizer, on English as a universal language.

Currently, 85% of mentions in science citations are in English, and this figure is rising. Most foreign contributors submit manuscripts in English in scientific, technical and medical publishing, and this can cause much confusion. Symbols, spelling, sentence/paragraph arrangement and references are all affected. One example given was the word 'insight'. In the manuscript this appeared as 'inside'. By deduction and the use of a spell-check programme, it was concluded that the author had written the word 'insite'; spell-check had refused this, and one of the alternatives was 'inside'. The actual word wanted was 'insight', but the author had not known how to spell it.

There were many questions from the floor, covering—latitude for author style; style of writing different from country to country; punctuation, varieties of; changing author style—was this permitted? was there direct con-
tact with the author? and the fact that translation of a paper was not the end product—editing/copyediting was still needed and specialist knowledge very necessary.

Jacqueline Bayes, manager of freelance staff who provide services for Longmans, discussed changing markets, management skills, the importance of freelancers, training for all new people, and the increasingly important part played by packagers.

A number of questions were asked—what was the need for outside specialists? economic considerations; should there be just one person covering manuscript to page proofs? (the general consensus was, no); publisher awareness of new technology; the law as it relates to freelance work (a grey area, particularly as far as tax is concerned—are we schedule D or E, for example?); and was there a lobby for the self-employed?

Finally David Bell, Standards, Assessment and Management Consultant, covered the coming National Vocational Qualifications system. This is a complicated system which will involve every working person in the UK. Objectives include rationalization and updating systems of qualifications and enabling industry to set its own standards. There will be areas of transferrable competencies, i.e., core areas common to many disciplines forming a national framework. Characteristics include: criterion-referenced; task focused via work/job; competence-based industry defined; specific performance criteria; knowledge embedded in tasks/job roles; application of skills to workplace; work-based assessment; and accreditations of prior learning.

Defining standards would be done through the Dept. of Employment and leading industry bodies. The structure of the units would contain element and performance criteria; and the frameworks would be broad-based (publishers would probably come under ‘media’). There will be five levels of qualifications, ranging from elementary to professional. Assessment of competence would be done by setting up a peer system: an individual would register and fill in a ‘log-book’ of competence, and would also be required to present a portfolio of his/her work. An internal/external assessor would be appointed to check individual competence; each society would register a centre of competence and these would be monitored by external assessors.

The scheme will be administered by the Publishing Qualifications Board now being established, with charitable status, and to be based on the Bookhouse Training Centre in Wandsworth, which has been designated the official ITO (Industrial Training Organization) for the publishing industry.

The panel discussion covered several topics: why no credits for all contributors to a book? how to charge for freelance work (by the hour, page, or job?); use of computers; minimum rate (new NUJ hourly rates of pay are proofreaders, £10.50; copyediting, £11.50; subediting, £12.50); communication between publishers and editors; and training courses.

SFEP has really taken off and established itself since its 1988 formation.

Geraldine Beare

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**Quasi-automated indexing: a search-and-juggle routine**

‘Inexpensive, dedicated software can reduce the time needed to prepare an index for a major monograph from about three weeks to three days,’ declares Alaric Faulkner in *Historical Archaeology* 24, 1990 (125–32). ‘Indexing is a tedious and expensive process...it is understandable that this step is often omitted. Nevertheless compiling an index can be greatly facilitated with a dedicated indexing program such as Maclndexer.’

Want to know how it’s done?

‘One begins by repaginating the original text on a word processor so that it corresponds to the pagination of the final layout. One then reads through this text file [1], copies the words and phrases [2] that belong in the index, and places them on a separate list. The indexing program will then compare the original text to the list, find every occurrence of the items [3] and file them alphabetically with the pages on which they occur. A few hours of judicious editing, consolidating some entries and subordinating others [4], and the index is complete; a three-week job is reduced to less than three days.

... Most advanced word processing programs now have provisions for indexing, but at present they require “flagging” each entry with embedded text prior to compilation...The older Maclndexer approach [5] is more flexible, and although the product is no longer published, it is still in general circulation [6].’

*Our comments:*

[1] In the age of IT, must we no longer read through on paper?

[2] —making sure every feature is on the list.


[4] —and going back to the text to find those that need to be expanded, subheaded, concatenated, amalgamated, cross-referenced, subsumed, etc.

[5] Does this mean the ‘older’ feature is no longer available? or—

[6] —copiable from a fellow MacUser?

*O sancta simplicitas!*