American Society of Indexers (ASI)

Theresa J. Wolner details the contents of the latest ASI newsletters:

Standards and credit

An article on standards for indexes opens ASI's Newsletter No. 108 for January/February 1992. The first meeting of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) Committee on Standards for Indexes was held in Washington, D.C. on 25 October, 1991. The article 'Standards for Indexes to be Expanded' discusses this first meeting and committee plans. The committee did a careful analysis of the August 1990 draft of the International Standards Organization (ISO) 'Guidelines for the preparation of indexes to books, periodicals and other documents'. Compatibility with this developing international standard is one of the goals of the NISO group. While the standard will continue to focus on the presentation of information-retrieval indexes to users, the results of automatic computer-based indexing, human intellectual analysis, and combinations of these approaches to index creation will be addressed by the committee. In its one formal vote at this first meeting, the committee unanimously urged NISO to appoint a committee to create an American National Standard for the arrangement of characters and symbols used in the representation of information, with emphasis on the most commonly used non-alphanumeric symbols. Preparation of draft guidelines and plans for future meetings were also discussed at the meeting.

NISO reports appear regularly in the ASI Newsletters. ASI's Voting Representative to the National Information Standards Organization provides information on current standards work and reports on the outcome of votes taken at NISO meetings. ASI's most recent voting representative was Jessica Milstead.

Anne Leach's 'PR Action Line' column presents 'Credit for Your Indexes' by Anita M. Cullinan. Results of an ASI survey on credit for indexes are discussed. The survey answered two main questions: 1) do indexers want credit for their work, in the form of a credit line appearing on the copyright page, in the acknowledgements, or in the index itself? and 2) are publishers willing to give such a credit line? Survey responses from indexers indicate that we do want credit for our work; responses from publishers, however, indicate that indexes are not usually credited. In addition, varied comments from publishers indicate that indexers need to become more visible to publishers and authors. To communicate the importance of quality indexes and to promote professional recognition of indexers are basic tenets of ASI. The ASI publicity committee works on the seemingly neverending task of educating the public and the publishing community.

In 'We Are What We Speak', Tom McFadden's 'Journal Watch' column presents a report on the ASIS 1991 conference and a review of the book Technobabble by John Barry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991). Two indexing software programs, AMA Indexer and CINDEX 5.1 are featured in 'Electronic Shoebox.' Ed Serdziak's reviews are detailed and descriptive. Serdziak recommends AMA Indexer for institutions with large journal data reporting/indexing requirements. CINDEX is highly recommended as powerful, versatile indexing software for the professional indexer. AMA Indexer is available by contacting Norman Frankel at the American Medical Association, and CINDEX is available from Indexing Research located in Rochester, New York.

'Content Analysis—Part Two' is presented by Sylvia Coates in the 'Indexing Workshop' column. Bella Hass Weinberg provides answers to problematic indexing questions relating to the structure of ideas. Examples of: 1) overlapping semantic categories, 2) use of subheadings in relation to the structure of the text, pose the questions. Weinberg refers to the draft American National Standard for thesaurus structure to establish relationships between terms, and application of a systematic approach, chain indexing, is proposed for dealing with subheads. Weinberg states that 'the structure of the index is developed in relation to the structure of the book'.

In 'Do You Have an Indexer Personality?' Do Mi Stauber emphasizes self-discipline, good planning, attention to detail and global thinking. For the freelance indexer, Stauber gives pointers to consider for starting or improving your business enterprise.

Technologies and deadlines

ASI looks at hypermedia and CD-ROM in its opening article for Newsletter No. 109, March/April 1992. David C. Heiret reports on the International Conference and Exposition on Multimedia and CD-ROM held at the...
Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, March 1992. The many emerging technologies presented at the conference provide an arena of tremendous growth potential in opportunities for all indexers.

The 'Journal Watch' columns provide notes on articles and books of interest to indexers. In this issue, column editor, Tom McFadden presents 'Reading for Fine Indexing' by Hazel K. Bell. How indexers read books differs greatly from how other persons read books: 'Abstracting the pith and moment of a narrative work, an informed indexer reduces text to discrete elements, placing passionate and other relationships in logical groupings'. Bell forewarns authors that the indexer may be his/her closest and most sensitive reader. The detail, attitude, and language of the book are reflected by a good index.

In 'Electronic Shoebox,' Ed Serdziak announces that Kensa Software developer Doug Williams is about to release the Macintosh version of IN>SORT. Serdziak notes that this program promises to demonstrate the power and productivity of the windows interface for indexers.

Nancy Mulvany, in her final 'Passing Mentions' column, presents 'Deadlines, Deadlines, Deadlines: Getting Blood Out of a Turnip'. Mulvany is a freelance indexer and speaks from experience regarding the constant deadlines inherent in an indexer's life. Other passing mentions include comments on conferences, networking, reviewing, and teaching: potential forums of opportunity for the professional indexer.

The 'Indexing Workshop' column by Sylvia Coates presents 'Book and Database Indexing: A Comparison' by Dave Billick. Discussed are book index as stand-alone product, book vs. database records, pre-vs. post-coordination, space and overindexing, thesauri, and human factors. Differences between book and database indexing are noted. Indexer personality traits may apply to both types of work, but Billick advises that it is important to have direct experience in using the two types of tools.

Wilson Award

In Newsletter No. 110 for May/June 1992, ASI announces the Wilson Award winner. Vita Richman reports on Jo Johnson as recipient of the Wilson Award for her index in American law of real property, published by Matthew Bender. Johnson credits Bender's training and demand for good indexes. Johnson is a freelance indexer who is also developing software programs for indexing in science fields. The Wilson Award is named for H. W. Wilson, the founder of a reference-book publishing firm that dates back to the nineteenth century. The Wilson Award has been jointly cosponsored with ASI since 1979.

Editor, Ed Serdziak in 'Electronic Shoebox' reviews The Index Editor (TIE) by Array Incorporated. TIE is primarily aimed at publishing houses, governmental agencies, educational organizations, and other institutions with major indexing requirements. A thorough review is provided including information about installation, pointers for working with TIE, a list of special features, limitations and recommendations. Interested corporate users should contact Array Incorporated located in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In a new column, 'One on One . . .' by Elsie Lynn, we will meet our indexing colleagues whose careers offer insights to success. This first interview is with Linda Fetters, current ASI president.

'Collection—or, How to Get Your Money' by Elaine English and Gail Ross, attorneys specializing in publishing and other media law, is featured in the 'Getting Down to Business' column. Collection methods for debts which are more than 30 days delinquent require special handling. Inquiries you make should provide reason for nonpayment. These reasons are important and can have impact on the course of action you follow. What are your rights? They may include the right to sue, a claim of copyright infringement, damages, and entitlement to an order forcing the publisher to publish or return your work in addition to monetary damages. What is your recourse? Retain a lawyer, hire a collection agency, and/or take it to small claims court. Exploring these legal alternatives to enforce your rights will show some ways to deal with delinquent clients.

In the 'Indexing Workshop' column, Sylvia Coates explores 'What To Do When You Disagree with the Editor?' Guidelines are presented for dealing with the index as a product that must satisfy editors as adversaries; format preferences; flexibility of editors; and ways to save grief. Ideally, working with an editor on enhancing a book with a good index can be a constructive and mutually educational experience.

The current editor of the ASI Newsletter is Anne Leach. The Newsletter is published six times a year. The views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors. Editorial address is ASI Newsletter, 990 Winery Canyon Road, Temecula, California 93465. ASI membership information is available from ASI Membership, P.O. Box 386, Port Aransas, Texas 78373.

—Report by Theresa J. Wolner, ASI member, former librarian, working mother, and business partner in freelance indexing firm, Information Lost & Found, St. Paul, Minnesota.
Australian Society of Indexers

Ian Odgers reports on AusSI activities

AusSI’s Annual General Meeting was held in Melbourne on 27 Feb. The 1992 National/Victorian Branch Committee was elected, with Isabelle Mentha as President; George Levick as Vice-President; Joyce Korn as Treasurer, and Ian Odgers as Secretary; Mary Long, Josephine McGovern, Max McMaster, Cherryl Schauder, John Simkin as the Committee members.

At a meeting of the National Committee in March, Max McMaster tabled the official invitation documents for the proposed International Indexing Conference to be held in Melbourne in April 1995. Copies of the documents were distributed, inviting the participation of SI and affiliated organizations. Acceptance has now been formalized and plans are well under way for this important event.

Alan Walker spoke on pictorial indexing at a meeting of the NSW Branch in Sydney on 9 April. He demonstrated a videodisk capable of accommodating some 54,000 photographic images, linked to a PC for retrieval and to a thermal printer for supplying copies. A second speaker at the meeting was Caroline Colton, who described the indexing of a photographic slide collection and the design of a database lending system for 6,500 transparencies.

Another major activity of the NSW Branch was a repeat of last year’s introductory book-indexing course, in conjunction with the University of NSW, over six weekly evenings from 22 April.

The title of a general meeting of the Victorian Branch held on 19 May was ‘Stir an Indexer’. A panel of experienced indexers fielded a wide range of curly questions which included; choice of terms; working with consultants; cross-referencing names and nicknames; directory-style indexes; page strings—how many are too many; updating an index; vocabulary control; and Ministerial Orders and how to find them.

AusSI Newsletter

Five issues of the Newsletter were published, each month except Jan. (Vol. 16, nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Helen Kinniburgh’s editorship concluded with the March issue (no. 2) because of her increasing work commitments and studies. Helen’s 14-month period as editor saw an increased frequency of issue, from four to ten per year, and a change to wholly in-house production. Helen’s work in vitalizing the Newsletter was greatly appreciated.

The winner of the holiday competition was announced in the Feb. issue (no. 1). Anna Beth McCormack won free membership for 1992 with her answers to ‘A book without an index is like . . .’: ‘a maze without a map; the Gordian Knot without Alexander; a voyage without a compass; a pyramid without a passage; statistics without mathematics; the Lost World without Conan Doyle; being in Bligh’s longboat, but the sextant doesn’t work, nor does the compass, and it’s cloudy all the time, and Timor is 2000 miles away somewhere over there’. In the March issue (no. 2) Kingsley Siebel reviewed the computer indexing program Macrex Version 5, describing its new and improved features, and concluding: ‘Altogether a sophisticated, versatile and complete program which will enable you to concentrate on making yourself a better indexer while Macrex takes charge of all the chores and acts as your obedient servant.’

The April issue (no. 3) was the first for our new editor, Steve Sunter. While ordinary mortals may have trouble scrabbling for the right word, Steve has no such problem, having been Australian Scrabble Champion in 1989 and recently having won the Victorian State Championship. Steve’s skills soon became apparent: his first editorial assured readers there would be ‘consecutions, sockdologers and ratiocinations’, not ‘loquacity, enthymemes and speciousness’ and that ‘causeries and apercus’ were welcome!

The June issue (no. 5) was the first special expanded one for the year. Caroline Colton contributed an article based on her talk at the NSW Branch meeting in April. She had been contracted to design a database system to stream-line requests for photographic images from a collection of 6,500 slides on workplace health and safety. Caroline described the setting up of a lending system and the design of an indexing system, an important feature of which was the framing of a contextual guide for four main subject fields. George Levick gave a detailed review of Indexing from A to Z by Hans H. Wellisch, comparing and contrasting the book with G. Norman Knight’s Indexing, the art of. George concluded: ‘Beginner or professional, if you need (as most of us do at least some of the time) a guide, friend and especially philosopher on your desk, this is one of those few books you simply must not fail to consider’. John Simkin reviewed Indexing and abstracting in theory and practice by F. W. Lancaster, finding that the author had achieved the two aims of a good textbook: presenting comprehensibly the concepts of the subject and providing sufficient guidance to enable practical application of the principles.
Angela Osterreicher reports:

In *IASC Bulletin* 14(2) for January 1992, Michele Hudon, President of IASC/SCAD, reports that membership renewals have been steady. Michele explains how membership fees are used and hints at a pending membership fee increase: ‘Five years without raising membership fees . . . probably a world record’.

Peter Greig enlightens IASC members with a brief historical perspective of biblio-association and informatics-society development in the United States, Britain and Canada for the past 100 years. In Canada, the first official attempt to form a group of indexers was in 1969 when the Bibliographic Society of Canada (BSC) formed an Index Committee. This pioneer Committee ceased in 1973/74. Although there is no direct connection, the formation of IASC in 1977 continued some of the aims and objectives of the BSC’s Committee. Peter adds, ‘The continued success of the organization is determined by its ability to grow and meet the new needs of that body of individuals as their requirements change and develop’.


In *IASC Bulletin* 14(3), March 1992, the President of IASC asks the membership to participate in the Society by providing input and becoming actively involved on the Executive. Michele promises a special 15th-anniversary issue of *IASC Bulletin* for June which will give a history of IASC’s beginnings and review options for the future. IASC will be sponsoring a workshop on 1 May, 1992 called, ‘Managing access to corporate records, or can they find it when they need it?’ with Bob Taylor-Vaisey, Susan Senese, and Marlene Sachs. Following the workshop, IASC will hold its Annual General Meeting. Rica Night spoke to IASC members on 5 Feb. on freelance back-of-the-book indexing. Her message was, ‘The key to getting indexing work is networking’.

Peter Greig continues with his history of indexing in Canada. He recounts how public interest in indexing developed through the 1970s. In 1974, a National Conference on the ‘State of Canadian Bibliography’ was held in Vancouver. In 1975, the Committee on Bibliographic Services for Canada (CBSC) was established. The Committee, using surveys, investigated the effectiveness of Canadian indexing and abstracting services, which led to a workshop held by the National Library. One recommendation from this workshop was to form an association of Canadian indexers and abstractors. A subgroup of CBSC investigated this recommendation and held an exploratory meeting in 1977 at CLA’s annual conference. Shortly after this, a provisional executive was formed and the first meeting of the Canadian Society for Indexing and Abstracting (CSIA) held. It was not until 1978 that the Society’s name changed to IASC. Peter Greig tells us, ‘Much had been accomplished in a very short time, but it remained to be seen if the new society could maintain its impetus and match its avowed objectives.’

**Society of Indexers**

The SI Annual Report for 1991–1992 (1 April - 31 March) shows a membership of 884—811 in the UK, 55 overseas, and 18 institutional. Ken Bakewell completed his term of office as President of the Society, and was succeeded by Professor David Crystal, with new Vice-Presidents Doreen Blake, John Gibson and Connie Tyler joining Valerie Chandler, Dorothy Frame and Anne McCarthy. Officers of the Society continued unchanged.

The Registrar had dealt with 113 enquiries for indexers from publishers, with a notable increase in the late summer. Complaints from publishers about indexes, and problems of members, such as bad debts, both increased. Three indexers became Registered, and 17 Accredited, having completed the SI training course. Units of this course were revised, and two training workshops held. 380 units of the training course were sold. The first Occasional Paper supplementing the course, on indexing biographies, was published.

Two issues of *The Indexer* were produced, with the index for volume 17, which totalled 304 pages. Distribution of the journal rose to over 2500 per issue, including 352 non-member subscribers in 49 countries. 46 back issues were sold, and 64 offprints of individual articles supplied. Four issues of the *SI Newsletter* and one of *MicroIndexer* were produced, and the tenth edition of *Indexers Available*, listing 246 members, with over 1400 copies distributed free to publishers.

Regional groups were active in Scotland and the Northwest.

The Society was represented on British Standards Institution Technical Committees DOT/- and DOT/2, and in the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers.