A new international agreement

Representatives of the American Society of Indexers (ASI), the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI), the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada (IASC/SCAD) and the Society of Indexers (SI) met last October in Tynemouth to develop an agreement for international cooperation.

Prior to that meeting the three younger societies each had a separate bilateral agreement with SI that set out the terms of affiliation and the obligations on both sides concerning The Indexer. As the societies matured, various clauses in the agreements became obsolete. Over the past couple of years it became apparent that the parental type of affiliation was irksome to ASI, AusSI and IASC, and that the reality of how they functioned with SI was not accurately represented by the agreements in place.

Despite the very limited time at its disposal, the group was able to quickly and harmoniously address the most pressing problems and to create a draft agreement that:

1. recognizes the equality of all participating societies;
2. recognizes the individual needs of the participating societies;
3. recognizes the international nature of The Indexer while affirming its status as an asset of SI;
4. formalizes the concept of an international delegate from each society to act as a liaison with other societies;
5. provides for members of all participating societies to attend meetings and conferences of the societies covered by the agreement at member rates;
6. keeps the door open for other societies to join in this agreement should they choose.

The draft has now been ratified by the executives of all four of the societies; it remains for the ASI membership to vote on it (probably happening as you receive this). If it goes through unchanged, each society will be operating under an agreement made amongst the four societies, rather than under a separate and slightly different agreement with SI. As international issues arise they will be dealt with through the liaison officers of the four societies, usually electronically; they will meet officially at one of the national conferences, the frequency to be decided upon.

The agreement will be formally reviewed periodically.

The China Society of Indexers (CSI) / Zhong-guo sosuo ying xie hue

CSI was founded in 1991 as ‘an independent non-profit academic organization engaged in index research and study’. According to its 1996 brochure, its aims include the promotion of research and study of index theory, compilation and publication of indexes, training of professional indexers, and strengthening of academic exchange at home and abroad. The Society works to unite indexers all over the country and with overseas colleagues, to broaden the areas of indexing services with advanced techniques and to use index science in the cause of modernization and socialization.

Alan Walker (AusSI president) visited with Prof. Ge and his colleagues while in Shanghai on the way to the Tynemouth conference. He reports that CSI is most enthusiastic about developing contacts with indexing societies in other countries. They have kindly invited him to attend their October 1999 conference to report on the international agreement coming out of Tynemouth.

The Society is headquartered in the University Library of the East China Normal University (Hua-dong Normal University) in Shanghai where it maintains research and study rooms used for various projects. Membership, which was at 300 in 1993, increased to 1000 by October 1998. National conferences are held every two years, the next one being in Dalian, northern China, in October 1999.

CSI publishes a newsletter, a membership directory and a website. It has two editorial departments concerned with the Series of Indexes to Chinese Research Treatises of the twentieth century and the Collected Essays of Index Research and Study.

Contact: The China Society of Indexers, University Library, East China Normal University, 3663 Zhong Shan Rd. (North), Shanghai 200062, China. Correspondence should be directed to Secretary General, Prof. Ge Yong-Qing — tel: (021)6257 7577 x2317; fax: (021) 6328 2359. http://www yp online.sh.cn.

Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers (ASAIB)

This small but active society has 81 members throughout South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. Despite the scattered membership they manage to maintain links with each other through meetings, seminars, branch activities and publications. Reuben Musiker edits their publications, including a Directory of indexes and bibliographers. ASAIB also puts out a newsletter three times a year. The current chairperson is Jacqueline Kalley and the secretary is Beth Strachan. Correspondence should be directed to: P.O. Box 740, Auckland Park 2006, Johannesburg, South Africa. Tel.: 482-5495; fax: 482-6163; e-mail: jkalley @eisa.org.za

Electronic indexing

As indexers struggle to translate their skills into the electronic environment, the demand for training in these areas is increasing. ASI is stepping into the breach with two full-day workshops at the Indianapolis conference: Web Indexing given by Kevin Broccoli, Marilyn Rowland and Gerry Van Ravenswaay, and Online Help Indexing given by Bill Meisheid.

Australian indexers, already recognized for their proactive
stance towards web indexing and web indexing courses, are continuing to add training opportunities. AusSI members have started offering a one-day course entitled Indexing Web Documents under the auspices of the Continuing Education program run by the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies (SILAS) at the University of New South Wales. Alan Walker, Glenda Browne and Jonathan Jermy along with Maureen Henninger of SILAS have run the course three times with participants including freelance indexers, librarians, and web managers. There is a challenge in balancing the needs of such a disparate audience, since web managers want to concentrate on indexing techniques and indexers want to learn more about the web.

SI has organized its first day-session on electronic indexing for May. This is part of its regular series of workshops on general indexing and specialized topics. SI subsidizes its training courses quite heavily, so that participant costs are very reasonable, and definitely good value.

AusSI has announced the winners of the 1998 Web Indexing Prize. See Dwight Walker’s report elsewhere.

Reaching out to publishers

ASI, AusSI, IASC/SCAD and SI all produce directories of indexers available for work. The American and the Australian are distributed in print format, while the Canadian and UK registers are also mounted on their websites.

There are benefits to creating local listings of indexers available to work. They are convenient for publishers and can be tailored to local needs. Some branches/chapters of the societies produce their own to highlight local expertise. Accordingly, SI’s Irish Branch is just releasing its first Register of Indexers available. A number of ASI chapters, such as Philadelphia and Chicago/Great Lakes have mounted local directories on their websites. Check them out on the links from the ASI homepage.

Not only do freelancers have to let publishers know who and where they are, but they need to convince them and educate them about what they can do. To this end the ACT Branch of AusSI is close to completing a guide to indexing services for publishers and other potential employers. This is the culmination of a research grant and several years work. The project is coordinated by Lynn Parkas, president of the ACT Branch.

With similar intent, SI has included a page aimed at publishers called Fees for indexing: guidelines for publishers that outlines the factors affecting rates and time required for index preparation. New indexers should also pay heed to this.

And speaking of fees and recommended rates ... AusSI and SI have revised their recommended rates as of January 1999. For straightforward text with no unusual time constraints, SI suggests a minimum rate of £14/hour. The AusSI minimum "hourly rate of pay for freelance, self-supporting, registered book indexers, working on short-term contracts is $au38".

ASI does not recommend rates, as this is a tricky legal area in the United States. However, it does have a useful FAQ discussion at its website on how to price services.

Projects

The Dawn Project: In the December 1998 issue of the AusSI Newsletter, Liz Lee discusses the challenges of creating a comprehensive index to The Dawn. This women’s journal, which was published between 1888 and 1905, was identified as a national priority for indexing by the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services.

Since it is used extensively for interdisciplinary research, it was decided to index all categories of materials, including advertizing and illustration. Also, in order to accommodate research needs in the areas of women’s studies, conceptual subject headings relating to women’s studies are used in addition to the factual content terms that are based on the text. The experimental aspects of the project include looking at words and patterns of terminology in view of automatic indexing, identifying levels of indexing and headings appropriate to the factual and conceptual elements, and testing of the various methods of indexing particular categories of materials.

The project is being conducted at the University of Adelaide by Penny Boumelha, Cheryl Hoskin and Liz Lee. Contact information: Liz Lee liz@dvcr.adelaide.edu.au; P.O. Box 265, Kent Town 5071, SA, Australia.

Disc-o-logue: Part of the National Library of Canada’s digitization initiative, this is an index of French-language songs, primarily Canadian, recorded during the 1950s to 1980’s. Derived from a 90,000 card file created by Louise Lamothe, a music store owner who kept extensive copyright files, the database documents music at a crucial turning point in Quebec history when the Roman Catholic Church was losing its influence and nationalist sentiment was evolving.

http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/discologue

Where to go, 1999

May 7-8: Montreal, Canada — ‘Indexing: from practice to research ... and back!’ IASC/SCAD’s annual conference.
October: Dalian, China — China Society of Indexers

Contributors to this column

I am looking for contributors from around the world, whether or not you are a member of one of the affiliated indexing societies. All you need is an e-mail address and an interest in accumulating and passing along snippets of information — current research, interesting projects, anything that may be of interest to indexers in other countries. Please contact Christine Jacobs at: cmjacobs@johnabbott.qc.ca

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