History of societies of indexers part V: 1983-87

Hazel K Bell

Retrospective articles in The Indexer, following SI’s Silver Jubilee, continued in 1983. The journal’s history was outlined (Bell 1983), and John Gordon considered the course of the indexing of the twelve volumes to date (Gordon 1983). L. M. Harrod reviewed the 20 years’ history of the Wheatley Medal and the four years of the H.W. Wilson award, listing the winners of both (Harrod 1983).

SI held a conference in Bristol in 1983. At this, Harrod announced the resignation of Margaret Anderson from her position of Vice-President, and the presentation to her of the Carey Award, as author of Book indexing and holder of several successive executive offices of SI (Pearson 1983). The Wheatley Medal for 1982 was there presented to P. W. M. Blayney for his index to his own book, The texts of King Lear and their origins (Dent 1983).

Cecil Robertson, SI Secretary, told the terrible tale of the two-thousand-plus enquiries she received when the Daily Mail published a feature on the ease and get-rich-quick-ability of indexing, without SI’s knowledge or consent... (Robertson 1983).

The hare of ‘Law and order, alphabetical’ was started again by Michael Gordon in the letters column of the October 1983 journal, stating a preference for word-by-word as against letter-by-letter, and page order for subheadings: ‘The virtue of page order is partly lost where there is more than one page to an entry; but alphabetical order seems to me to have no virtue to lose’, and enthusiastically pursued through the columns of the following two issues.

The journal’s first advertisement for ‘Computer-assisted indexing: programs to run on microcomputers’ (no program names) was placed by Hilary and Drusilla Calvert in October 1983. MicroIndexer, SI’s IT supplement to its Newsletter, began its ten years of occasional publication in January 1983.


Two awards were made of the Wheatley Medal for 1983: to A. R. Hewitt, SI’s Founder-Chairman, later Vice-President, for his index to The laws of Trinidad and Tobago; and to Robert Latham for that to his own edition of The diary of Samuel Pepys. These awards were announced in a report that also gave details of other awards involving indexers: the Library Association’s Besterman Medal, for an outstanding bibliography, to Bernard Adams for The comprehensive history of England, and in 1984-5, to those of Oliver Goldsmith, Henry Mayhew, Robert Mudie and John Ruskin; in 1986-7, of John Fiske, Lady’s Magazine (1776) and Notes and Queries (1850). ‘Index makers’ first featured Samuel Ayscough in April 1987, then Barbara Pym in October 1987.

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Series

Series in The Indexer became established. ‘Indexers in fiction’ had begun in April 1979 with a report of Elizabeth Jane Howard’s The long view, going on to cover Vonnegut’s Cat’s cradle, Northcote Parkinson’s Jeeves, Michael Innes’s Professor Hissey, Nabokov’s Charles Kinbote, several indexers in the works of Barbara Pym and Penelope Lively, P. D. James’s in A mind to murder, Angela Thirkell’s in County chronicle and Northbridge Rectory, and a miscellany in detective fiction.


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four societies can from then on be traced through their newsletters, filtered through by Judy Batchelor’s regular feature, ‘Shoebox, International’.

**American Society of Indexers**

ASI celebrated its 15th birthday at its 1983 AGM, honouring several Past Presidents. It mourned the death of its founder, Theodore Hines. There were 490 individual and five institutional members, with three chapters formed, three more forming. ASI provided seed-money for new chapters, and Chapter Starter Kits. ASI’s 1983-4 Register listed details of 320 indexes. The President was empowered to ‘select, appoint or hire’ an administrative assistant.

In October 1984 the Electronic Publishing Project, in which ASI was a ‘designated stake-holder’, was set up ‘to develop guidelines and standards for markups of manuscripts by authors and other persons having to do with final publication’. Details were given of the reorganization of the American National Standards Institute, with the independent National Information Standards Organization to take over many Standards. ASI instituted new By-laws in 1984, and ANSI published a revised edition of *Basic criteria for indexes*. And as Batchelor wrote in October 1984, ‘Through the three issues (newsletters no. 64-66) runs the exuberant rhetoric of Hans Wellisch’s castigations of a certain kind of computer-generated index’.

The H. W. Wilson Indexing Award was presented at the ASI Annual Meeting in Washington to Mary Fields for *Index and directory of the US Industry Standards* (Blake 1985).

The April 1985 ‘Shoebox’ instalment reports Wellisch’s succeeding Dorothy Thomas as ASI President, and the AGM centring on the effect of computers on indexing. ASI was to microfilm the whole run of its newsletter, and had established an electronic bulletin board for members with modems. Linda Fetters regularly reported on software programs in her ‘Electronic Shoebox’ column, herself working by telecommunication in an electronic cottage. ASI had combined with the American Society for Information Science in mounting a symposium on database indexing.

A new Chapter opened in Western New York — the sixth. In April 1986 the publication of the index to ASI Newsletters nos. 1-60 (1970-83) is announced; a year later, Linda Fetters’ regular reports on software programs were published as an updated compilation, *A guide to indexing software*. Two large ASI meetings, in New York and Washington, had shown substantial profits.

**Australian Society of Indexers**

Volume 8 of the AusSI newsletter, in 1984, reported the development of the *Australian art index*, and a project to fill the gap (1859-1909) in the *Argus newspaper index*. Volunteers were invited to précis weekly runs of the *Argus* for later cumulation. AusSI was negotiating with the Society of Editors there for the inclusion of Registered Indexers in their *Register of freelance publishing services*. Jean Hagger, President of AusSI, recounted its history to its 1985 AGM. Their current membership was 135, including three members in New Zealand; nearly two-thirds lived in Victoria.

AusSI had its own Register, was instituting its own indexing Medal, holding training courses, and had made a submission to the International Standards Organization towards the preparation of its Draft Standard on Indexing. In 1986 the first AusSI Indexing Award was presented, at a dinner in Melbourne, to Jeremy Fisher for his index to the 4th edition of *The Australian encyclopaedia*. The first Australian *Indexers Available* was published, and AusSI was asked to contribute to the forthcoming new edition of the Australian Government’s *Style manual*.

**Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada**

IASC’s 1983 Annual Meeting was held in Halifax. The administration moved from Ottawa to Toronto. By 1985 membership was 117; several publications had been produced, mostly by Peter Greig, including *The indexer as entrepreneur and String indexing: a selective reading list*.

**Society of Indexers**

Through ‘Shoebox’, for the parent society, can be traced the first publication of SI’s *Indexers Available* in 1983, and regular reissues; the establishment of weekends in a Scottish guest-house to learn computer skills; revisions of British Standards; a survey of computer use by SI members; a document available to members, *Counsel’s opinion on copyright*; the founding of a Scottish Group.

SI held its fourth weekend conference in Durham in 1985, attended by 62 members with visitors from ASI, AusSI and IASC (Bell 1985). The fifth, held at Chester in 1987, included the Inaugural Norman Knight Memorial Lecture (Bell 1987a). This was delivered by the Earl of Stockton, grandson of Harold Macmillan who, as Prime Minister, had welcomed the founding of SI in 1958. Introducing him, Vice-President Ken Bakewell outlined the life and achievements of G. Norman Knight, and the reasons for SI’s establishment of the Norman Knight Memorial Fund, to be used for a series of Norman Knight Memorial Lectures (Bakewell 1987).

The Carey Award was presented to William Heckscher, SI’s only founder-member from outside the UK, ‘art historian, polyglot, polymath, explorer of the frontiers of indexing as an art form, nourisher of The Indexer’s status and authority’ in 1987 (Gordon 1987).

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**References**


