A truly international agreement

The International Agreement (see p. 154) has now been accepted by the American Society of Indexers (ASI), the Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers (ASAIB), the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI), the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada/Société canadienne pour l’analyse de documents (IASC/SCAD) and the Society of Indexers (SI). They will be joined by the first non-English-speaking society when the China Society of Indexers has its ceremonial signing of the agreement during its October conference. With many issues in common, it can only be advantageous to all the societies to have a formalized system for exchanging information and for meeting. The next formal meeting of the international representatives will be during the SI 2000 conference in Cambridge, England.

Volunteering?

One way for indexers to get practice (and sometimes training) in interesting settings and materials is to do volunteer work. Not only are they learning, but they are giving something valuable to their communities. There are many non-profit projects that either would not see the light of day without volunteer labour, or are part of larger volunteer situations. Local libraries often sponsor local history and/or genealogical indexing projects and volunteer associations frequently need indexing help with their documents and collections. The following are samples, to give you some idea of the variety.

- The Anti-Slavery library of Thomas Clarkson House in London, England is calling for volunteers for a variety of projects, including turn-of-the-century journals series. Unfortunately, because of the fragility of the materials, all work must be done on site, but if you happen to live in London the contact person is Caroline Moorhead at <antislavery@gn.apc.org>.

- There is a call for indexing volunteers for the 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia. The games’ events are videotaped and indexed so that athletes, trainers, officials and journalists can get fast access for analysing heats, making reports, etc. The service will probably be located in the Olympic Village. So if you are experienced in video technology, or willing to be trained, can work quickly and accurately and can handle stress, you might be interested in applying for what would certainly be an interesting experience. Among the requirements are an ability to read and speak English, availability for interviews and training and a minimum of ten working days, and responsibility for your own travel and accommodation arrangements in Sydney. The address to contact for more information is Research and Information Volunteers, Locked Bag 2010, Broadway, New South Wales 2007, Australia.

- Looking for picture indexing experience? The Baltimore County Legacy Web project is looking for volunteers to work on the development of a digital image collection and web pages of historic photographs of Baltimore County, Maryland (USA). Applicants should have patience, an eye for detail, an affinity for historic subject matter, and some experience with Windows. Baltimore County Public Library will provide all the training. For more information call 510-887-2422.

Interesting meetings here and there

The Victorian Branch of the Australian Society of Indexers came up with a novel way of provoking insights from the panelists and questions from their audience. A cataloguer, an indexer and an archivist were given the same two genealogical documents to (theoretically) prepare for their databases. The resulting discussions highlighted the types of information needed and valued in the different situations.

Last May, the Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers organized a half-day seminar on museum indexing. With speakers from the Botanical Institute, the Military Museum, the Adler Museum of Medicine and the Museum Africa, there was considerable discussion. The Association will be publishing the proceedings in the near future.
Roundtable discussions in which one or two people lead a small-group discussion on a predetermined topic are usually popular at conferences. At the ASI Indiana-Heartland Chapter October conference, the topics include one called ‘Psychological Issues for Indexers’. It addresses freelance isolation, perfectionism, self-reinforcement and motivation, maintaining a sense of competence and preventing burnout. Surely this will be a well-subscribed discussion!

Distance and membership

It seems that most of the societies other than SI have difficulty dealing with the distances between their members. On top of that, it is often a challenge to come up with ways of running society business effectively, especially for the smaller associations. Both AusSi and IASC/SCAD spread their executive roles out across a number of cities in order to increase inclusiveness. While good for the general membership, it does put a strain on executive meetings. One of IASC/SCAD’s essential projects this year was to develop a system of formal e-meetings for the executive. As the Irish group found after hosting the SI conference two years ago, conferences can be effective in attracting membership (theirs went from 5 to 14). However, distance can mean that it is difficult to attract a critical mass to any one event. With more sharing of information at the international level, perhaps the various societies will be able to come up with mutually supportive ideas for dealing with these serious issues.

Recent publications

A number of the societies produce monographs. Among recently released items from ASI (available through Information Today, Inc. at <custserv@infotoday.com>) are:


New on SI’s list (available from the Society Office; see address on back cover) are:

Beare, Geraldine, *Indexing newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals*.


Where to go, 1999–2000

October 1999: Johannesburg, South Africa — Indexing for Africa: Past, Present, Future and a Little Y2K

October 1999: Dalian, China — China Society of Indexers conference

May 2000: Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA) — ASI annual conference


Contributors to this column

I need to hear from you about issues and happenings around the world. Perhaps you have news of an interesting project, current research findings, or a report of an event that you would like to share with the indexing world. Please send it all along to Christine Jacobs at <cmjacobs@johnabbott.qc.ca>.

Thank you to contributors Glenda Browne, Jill Halliday, Jacqueline Kalley and Helen Litton for help with this issue.

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