William Heckscher was born in Hamburg in 1904 and, after working for some years as a portrait painter, studied art history at Hamburg University. In 1936, as Hitler rose to power, Heckscher, a pacifist, fled Germany, first to Princeton Institute for Advanced Study and then to England. In 1940 he was interned as an enemy alien and transported to Canada, where he ran a prison school for two years. After the war he became a naturalized Canadian citizen and resumed an academic career, first as a teacher of languages, then returning to the Princeton Institute.

In sum, Heckscher was educated in the universities of Hamburg, New York and Oxford, and advanced the education of others at universities in Canada (Saskatchewan, Manitoba), the USA (Iowa State, Duke, Princeton) and the Netherlands (Utrecht), and also at learned institutions in Germany (Karl August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel), France (Collège de France, Paris), the USA (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC), and elsewhere. He retired as Benjamin N. Duke Professor at Duke University in 1974, moving to Princeton as Emeritus Professor of Art History and consultant to its Rare Books Department.

His publications, like his peregrinations, covered much more ground than might be expected. From an art historian, there is nothing surprising about such titles as Rembrandt's anatomy of Dr N. Tulp, Ancient art and its echoes in post-classical times, and Holbein's portrait of Erasmus at Longford Castle, or about his spell as editor of the Netherlands yearbook of art history. More arcane titles – for example, Genesis of iconology and Renaissance emblems – are indications of some of the particular aspects of art history in which he was acknowledged as one of the outstanding experts. For his Shakespeare and the visual arts he was awarded a Fellowship of the Folger Shakespeare Library. He was also Benjamin Franklin Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London, a member of the Advisory Board of the Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies; and his mind reached into new territory as author of Goethe and Weimar and Discussions with Albert Einstein.

After Norman Knight’s letter to the Times Literary Supplement proposing the founding of a society of indexers appeared in 1956, Heckscher was the only one who flew from overseas to attend SI’s inaugural meeting: from the Netherlands, he then being Director of the Iconological Institute of Utrecht University. He became SI’s Corresponding Member for the Netherlands, and contributed an article on SI to Het Boek 1959.

In 1962 he flew from Princeton to address a record attendance of more than 70 SI members on ‘The Index of Christian Art’; Knight called this ‘perhaps the finest of all the Society’s discussion meeting talks’. The paper (co-authored by Anna C. Esmeijer) appeared in the April 1963 Indexer and was described by the journal’s editor as ‘the most ambitious we printed’. It was reprinted as the only offprint on separate sale from the journal for many years.

In 1978 Heckscher spoke at SI’s first international conference, on ‘The unconventional index and its merits’ (the example being his own index to Joachim Camerarius’s analysis of Dürer’s Melancolia I’). ‘The type of index I have in mind’, he explained, should be more than the carefully tended cemetery of the ideas expressed in the... text... the Index which has a life of its own, which may pride itself on being the child of the imagination, and which should enable us to spend a peaceful evening in bed, reading such an Index, as if we were reading a good novel.

This subsequent article in The Indexer of April 1982, ‘one of the most significant that has ever appeared in this journal’, was reprinted in volume 17 of Saecula spiritulia: Art and literature: studies in relationship (Verlag Valentin Koerner).

In 1987 SI presented the fourth Carey Award to Heckscher, ‘the most internationally distinguished of our members of high repute’. The citation lauded him as: art historian, polyglot, polymath; explorer of the frontiers of indexing as an art form; creator of the theory of the unconventional index and its first successful practitioner; nourisher of THE INDEXER’s status and authority as an international journal and of the Society’s wide influence; inspiring leader, dedicated colleague, unfailing friend.

The Princeton Alciati companion (1989), written and (of course) indexed by Heckscher, was hailed by John Gordon as exemplifying the precepts of ‘the unconventional index’, both its index and glossary ‘replete with stimulating ideas and almost encyclopaedic information, providing illuminating and enjoyable reading... each enriches the other... WSH’s unique method of indexing enables the mind to float along an intensely fertile stream of relationships’.
Heckscher’s work as an indexer and for indexing was widely recognized. The editor of *Art and literature*, Egon Verhayen, wrote there:

William Heckscher is a born indexer. Indexing has indeed become one of his most pronounced passions. . . . for Heckscher, indexing does not mean culling words from a manuscript or book but building a system of meanings. . . . In its final perfection, the index would become an instrument of its own which would no longer need, or even be connected with a text.

In his fourth Festschrift, *Emblematic perceptions: Essays in honor of William S. Heckscher*, Virginia Woods Callahan cited among his ingenious innovations his ‘concept of what an index should be. Indexing has for him become “a pronounced passion”, as is evident from his numerous articles relating to indexing and the two volumes, *The Princeton Alciati Companion* and *Emblematic Variants* published by AMS Press.’

John Gordon greeted the 80th birthday of ‘the unique Canadian Hamburger’ in this journal with

Indexer, art historian, artist, polyglot, philosopher – it is as an indexer that we know him best. And what an indexer! He has led us beyond existing limits and shown us how the art of indexing can be enriched in ways that few if any of us had thought possible.

Most of the words above are taken from the tributes and reviews written by John Gordon of his ‘most loyal of colleagues, warmest of friends, modest to the point of self-mockery’. In one he referred to Heckscher’s ‘genius for correspondence. His letters are an unceasing flow of ideas, an irresistible blend of impish humour and learned observations’. As one of those privileged to enjoy ‘these inspiring epistolary relationships’, I can fervently attest to that. As the grateful editor of *The Indexer* throughout the years during which Heckscher so enhanced this journal, I expected one day to invite John to write this final tribute. John, though, died a year before his colleague.

William Heckscher leaves his widow, Roxanne, three daughters and three grandchildren.

Hazel K. Bell, freelance indexer

### Colin Matthew 1941–1999

Professor Colin Matthew, Wheatley Medallist in 1994, died unexpectedly of a heart attack on 29 October 1999 at the age of 58. He combined rigorous scholarship with extensive involvement in academic institutions; he was a Professor in the University of Oxford, a Fellow (and latterly Vice-President) of the British Academy, a Curator of the Bodleian Library, a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery and sometime Literary Director of the Royal Historical Society.

Indexers have also been honoured to have him as a contributor to *The Indexer*, a speaker, and a good friend and supporter of the Society of Indexers.

Colin Matthew compiled his first indexes, as a graduate student, to works including his own thesis, *The liberal imperialists*, and the journal *African Affairs* (he had spent the years immediately after his graduation teaching in Tanzania). In the early 1970s he embarked on his major work of scholarship, editing the diaries of W. E. Gladstone. The first two volumes had been produced by Professor M. R. D. Foot; Colin Matthew worked jointly with him on the third and fourth volumes and was sole editor of the remaining nine volumes of diaries. It was the final volume, an index to the whole edition, that earned him the Wheatley Medal. It comprises three separate indexes: those of the *dramatis personae* and of Gladstone’s reading, compiled from card indexes built up during the editing process, and the Subject Index, which Colin Matthew compiled during the last two years of the project by working through the whole text chronologically once more. He found that the work on the index illuminated new aspects of the diaries, writing that ‘the opportunity of using the index to open up, consolidate, almost to reinterpret, so central a text of the Victorian age, had been a formidable intellectual as well as technical challenge’. He regarded it as an important feature of the Gladstone index that it exists both in print and as a database, capable of being searched in combinations not foreseen by the compiler and of being updated, expanded and corrected. He carried these ideas with him into his next major undertaking, the editing of the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, the *NDNB*. It is to be published both in book and electronic form, the text of the latter being tagged and searchable in a scholarly and imaginative use of the opportunities offered by this new medium.

Colin Matthew spoke of his indexing as a joint enterprise, using ‘we’ rather than ‘I’. He and his wife, Sue, worked on the early indexes together; later, as the material for the *Gladstone* index accumulated and he had the help of a number of research assistants and computer experts, he spoke of himself as one of the team. He came to the Society in the same self-effacing spirit, bringing an authority that was the greater for his down-to-earth openness and honesty. We wish that we had known him longer.

Barbara Hird, freelance indexer

*The Indexer* Vol. 22 No. 1 April 2000
Freda Wilkinson 1910–1999

The Society of Indexers lost one of its most valuable and unforgettable members on 26 November 1999 when Alfreda May Wilkinson (née Truman) died just two months before her 90th birthday. SI was represented at her funeral by Cherry Lavell, who gave one of several tributes offered by her friends;¹ and the Society has also made a donation to the National Trust in Freda’s name.

Freda was born in Lincoln on 23 January 1910 and always retained a strong affection for the city. Her mother died while Freda was in her teens, so Freda, as expected at the time, looked after her craftsman father, and was also close to her aunt’s family. After the Second World War, in her mid-thirties, she moved to London and worked for a consultancy, which must have widened her horizons. She shared a flat with a much younger woman, one Sylvia; their tastes in music being different, Freda characteristically arranged a compromise, Sylvia’s popular music one weekend, Freda’s classics the next. The friendship endured, Freda much later becoming godmother to Sylvia’s daughter. At some stage Freda was asked to run a little school for small children, but always stopped lessons when Tower Bridge opened so that they could all watch.

Freda had never wanted to be a homebody but in 1958, aged 48, she married James Wilkinson, settling into a large house in Hendon, in northwest London. James was much older but they shared many enthusiasms, including archaeology, natural sciences, Fabianism, and filling the house with books. It was probably when James became ill that Freda discovered her undoubted talent for indexing, which would enable her to work at home in the intervals of looking after James (who died in the late 1960s).

She joined the Society in January 1968 and her first index was to a popular work on fish and chips — what a good start! Another book was on Venice and its gondoliers, but she gravitated naturally towards archaeology, becoming one of its very best indexers. Her orderly mind also found a talent for accounts, and on becoming SI Treasurer in 1974 she set about transforming a rather homely system into proper double-entry bookkeeping, continuing until Barbara Britton took over in 1980. She was deeply engaged in fostering SI’s relationship with our affiliated societies, carefully balancing fairness to their members with the need to retain sound finances for SI. Another valuable, even vital task Freda performed for SI was to introduce John Gordon to us in the mid-1970s; in her new neighbour she recognized an outstanding administrator who could, and most certainly did, revitalize our then sagging Society. Ken Bakewell, then chairman of the Society, recalls many happy journeys to Hendon with John and Freda after Council meetings: the three would light-heartedly dissect sometimes difficult meetings, and John and Ken would delight in listening to stories about Freda’s cat. Moreover, Freda would sometimes provide lunch for Council members when they met at her house. In the meantime, Freda herself was becoming a valued assessor and examiner at both levels of the Society’s qualifications; she also sat on the Editorial Board of The Indexer.

Besides all this she was attending conferences (both archaeological and our own), touring Italy (she especially admired the Etruscan civilization’s equality between men and women), amassing books on a wide variety of subjects, enjoying Shakespeare, and quietly collecting an A-level in English — aged 64. Her keen interest in art took her to painting courses and art exhibitions, while her love of gardens and architecture led her to visit National Trust properties around the country. Her own garden was a constant delight to her and she treasured her greenhouse collection of orchids, gaining inspiration at Kew Gardens and elsewhere. She was one of the stalwarts of the formidably near-professional Hendon & District Archaeological Society and became extremely knowledgeable about prehistoric flint tools. Moreover, when one of her lodgers departed leaving his cooker in a state, she took it completely apart and had all 17 pieces on the floor to clean them…

She became an SI Vice-President in 1983, relinquishing the position in 1991 but still keeping the liveliest interest in the Society, devouring all our publications and requiring oral reports (including gossip) from anyone who could provide them. In the early 1990s she suffered a mysterious illness which led to arthritis; becoming steadily more incapacitated she had spells in hospital and then 24-hour carers in her own beloved home. Her mind remained as bright as ever and friends were always enthusiastically and hospitably welcomed, especially if they played Scrabble, at which her encyclopaedic mind made her hard to beat. Even when nearly blind and deaf she required to be kept firmly in touch with the news – politics and personalities alike.

There is no doubt that she had been born a couple of decades later and with better opportunities she could have made her mark as an academic – but then she might not have joined our Society! Freda was sparky, funny, and sharply analytical, but she was also self-effacing, being one of those apparently retiring people who draw people as if by a magnet. She never talked about herself unless closely questioned, and no one ever heard a word of complaint even at the worst points of her illness. She was completely honest (sometimes disconcertingly so – she did not like the proposals for revising SI’s Registration procedure!). She cared passionately for the Society’s advancement and

certainly made a strong contribution to it, for which she was
made an Honorary Life Member. We are honoured to have
had her among us.

Note
1 Fortunately many of the details recounted here (as well as
many many more) were elicited by Freda’s cousin Tricia
Nelson during hours of happy chats with Freda herself in
the last years of her life. I am grateful to Tricia for permission
to extract from the address she gave at the funeral. Further
contributions have come from Mary Piggott, Barbara Britton,
Ken Bakewell and Margaret Maher of the ‘Hendon
Archaeologicals’.

Cherry Lavell, retired indexer

Around the World

Christine Jacobs

China Society of Indexers

The China Society of Indexers (CSI) is now officially affili-
ated with the American Society of Indexers (ASI), the Asso-
ciation of Southern Africa Indexers and Bibliographers
(AASAIB), the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI), the
Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada (IASC/SCAD)
and the Society of Indexers (SI). With permission from the
Chinese Ministry of Culture, an official agreement was
signed during CSI’s October conference in Dalian.

Conference successes

AusSI’s Second International Conference in Hobart,
Tasmania, met with considerable success. It was attended
by delegates from Australia, Britain, the United States and
New Zealand, and covered a wide range of subjects
including website, database, bibliographic, book and
journal indexing. Included were presentations on the
Australian publishing industry, on the difficulties of
indexing to meet the needs of broad and narrow queries,
and on the political problems of choosing indexing terms
acceptable to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.
For a more comprehensive report, check out the October
issue of the AusSI newsletter on their website: http://
www.aussi.org

Both the AASAIB and the CSI conferences took place in
October. ‘Indexing for Africa: Past, Present, Future and a
Little Y2K’ drew people to Johannesburg to hear presenta-
tions on a variety of subjects. Look for AusSI president Alan
Walker’s report on the conference in China elsewhere in
this issue of The Indexer (pp. 21–2).

Connecting electronically

Clearly, indexers love discussion lists. The opportunity to
escape momentarily from what is for many of us a solitary
calling, to enjoy the collegiality of ‘talking’ to others who do
the same thing and are faced with the same problems, is very
appealing.

Index-L is perhaps the best-known general-purpose list
with participants from a number of countries. There are a
number of others however. aliaIndexers is sponsored by the
Australian Libraries and Information Association and
Indexstudens focuses on the needs of beginner indexers
everywhere, although it was started primarily to meet the
needs of people enrolled in the USDA indexing course.

SI has just launched its members-only discussion list,
SIdeline, in order to provide its members with a forum to
discuss local issues and society matters. ASI has had a
similar list in operation for a while, ASI-L, and at least one
of its chapters has a local discussion list: INDEX-NW.

There are three lists devoted to indexing software informa-
tion exchange – Cindex, Macrex and SKY Index.

Index-L is perhaps the best-known general-purpose list
with participants from a number of countries. There are a

Windmail, based in Australia, is focused on web indexing
discussions. Other specialized discussion lists are undoubt-
edly emerging as I write! For information on how to
subscribe to any of the lists mentioned here, go to the ASI,
AusSI and SI websites (see inside back cover for URLs).

Do you know what a WebRing is? Robin Hilp maintains a
website that links a ‘ring’ of sites devoted to indexing. The
Indexer’s WebRing will lead you to the websites of fellow
indexers and you are encouraged to join and register your
site so that people can find you more easily. Go to http://
www.geocities.com/Athens/4537/indxr.html

Member services at ASI

ASI has hired an association management company to
provide management and administrative support services.
Drohan Management Group of Reston, Virginia, will
handle such tasks as conference registration, the printing of
Key Words and other ASI membership publications, as well
as helping with conference organization (however, ASI
monographs will continue to be published by Information
Today, Inc.). The ASI offices moved on 1 February 2000
(see the inside back cover for the address).

Among its other services, ASI now offers members two
plans for accessing legal and financial information – a Legal
Access Plan suitable for general needs and a Small Business
Legal Network Plan that is designed for small business
owners. In exchange for a small monthly fee members have
access to unlimited legal and financial telephone advice and
discounted office visits.