How much have we really changed?

It is salutary to remember that Henry Wheatley wrote his book *How to make an index* a hundred years ago this year, five years after his book *What is an index?* Both have long been out of print, but the Society of Indexers has published facsimile copies this year of both books, to mark the centenary. The books are a really good read. There is no Victorian fustiness or fussiness of style. The writing is direct and entertaining, with not a little humour. This from a man born in 1838, whose life was worlds away from the electronic aids and instant communications we use now.

Wheatley was the first secretary of the Index Society, founded in 1877 (for more details see the article by Mary Pigott in *The Indexer* 22(1), April 2000, pp. 33–5). This organization ultimately merged with the British Record Society, and sadly has no direct link with the Society of Indexers, which was not founded until much later.

Jill Halliday reports that indexing was obviously flourishing pretty well in the early 20th century. She recently came across an article in the *Every-woman’s Encyclopaedia*, part 15, published in 1909 or 1910, which gives a page and a half of information about how and where to train in indexing, and the ‘remuneration obtainable’. The article laments the fact that ‘publishers of ordinary books do not as a rule pay well’, and notes that ‘competition is certainly growing keener in this profession’. Six months is recommended for basic training, but ‘quite eighteen months is required’ for technical and scientific indexing. There is a warning to heed: ‘Many people think that any well-educated person can compile an index. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth’. Fascinating, indeed, to find that so little has changed in a century.

Genealogical indexing: reaching across boundaries

It is astonishing to see the amount and variety of genealogical indexing that is carried on across the world. It has been an active field for many years, but the advent of electronic communication and specialized software has improved accessibility and provided a means for the sharing of tasks and information.

**Britain**

In Britain, the *National Burial Indexing Project*, generally referred to as the Shroud Project, is being compiled by the Northumberland and Durham Family History Society under the auspices of the Federation of Family History Societies. It is designed to complement the International Genealogical Index that covers baptisms and marriages and is expected to be published on a county-by-county basis. Volunteers working from anywhere in the world are welcome, whether they have a little time or a lot to devote to the project. More information can be found at:

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/6549/BurProj.html

**Australia**

The National Archives of Australia’s *Bringing Them Home* indexing project involves the identification and preservation of Commonwealth records relating to Indigenous people and communities, and the creation of an index to the names of the Indigenous people contained in the records. The project began in 1998, arising from a report (bearing the same name) of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. It aims to help the reunion of Indigenous people in families and communities by indexing the hundreds of thousands of names in administrative records that derive from a wide variety of sources. Among the challenges posed in the indexing is that someone may be identified only by a single European-imposed name along with a geographical location. For further information about the project check out the article by Jim Stokes in the September 2001 issue of the *AusSI Newsletter* (www.aussi.org.au/0108sep/index.htm) and Fact Sheets 169 and 175 on the website of the National Archives of Australia (www.naa.gov.au/publications/fact_sheets).

**Canada**

*Home Children (1869–1930)* is the name of a database at the National Archives of Canada. Members of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa have been locating and indexing the names of the children found in the...
passenger lists in the custody of the National Archives (www.archives.ca). Over 100,000 children were sent to Canada during those years, many from Dr Barnardo's Homes.

Worldwide

The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry is focused on gathering names and identifying information from cemeteries and burial records from the earliest records to the present. Volunteer groups are asked to 'adopt a cemetery or landsmanschaft plot' and to index the records for submission to the project. Extensive information on this ambitious project is provided at

http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetary/

To support the lively interest in genealogical indexing, both the Society of Indexers (SI) and the American Society of Indexers (ASI) have special interest groups. Check out their websites or contact Jim Pellien (ASI) at jpellien@bellatlantic.net or Colin Mills (SI) at cdjmills@hotmail.com ASI has also announced the impending publication of Genealogy and Indexing, edited by Kathy Spaltro. AusSI has a page of useful genealogical links and contact people on its web site.

Deaths

Following the unexpected death in February of SI’s Betty Moys, a tribute celebrating her life and work is published below. As we go to press, we have also learned of the death in November 2001 of Kingsley Siebel, a prominent member of the New South Wales branch, and an honorary life member of AusSI since 1999. A full obituary will be published in the October issue.

Recent publications


Booth, Pat (2001) Indexing: the manual of good practice. Munich: K. G. Saur (€110, available to members of the indexing societies from the SI office at the discount price of £50 (UK), £53.50 (Europe) and £58/$116 (rest of world).)


Wheatley, H. B. (1902) How to make an index. London: Elliot Stock. 236 pp. Facsimile reprint published 2002 by the Society of Indexers (£18.00 UK; £20.00 overseas). Both books available together for £30 (£34 overseas)

Where to go, 2002

16–19 May: Galveston, Texas – ASI annual conference
24 May: Montreal, Canada – IASC annual conference
26 June: Johannesburg, South Africa – Bibliography: Dead Duck or Useful Tool (ASAIB annual conference)

Contributors to this column

Thank you to contributors Jill Halliday and Helen Litton. Please contact me at the address below if you have news about indexing research or projects that you would like to share.

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Obituary

Betty Moys MBE 1928–2002

Elizabeth Mary Moys, MBE, BA, FLA – Betty, as she was known to all of us – was born on 26 June 1928 in Wickford, Essex. She was educated at Chislehurst County Grammar School for Girls and at Queen Mary College, University of London. Upon her retirement as librarian of Goldsmith’s College, London, after a distinguished career in librarianship, she embarked on an equally distinguished career as an indexer, regularly indexing ongoing encyclopaedic legal reference works. As a stalwart member of the Society of Indexers for 15 years, she helped to guide it through a period of considerable change and development. At the urging of Janet Shuter, who had met her at the Chester Conference in 1987, she joined Council in 1991, serving as Treasurer from 1992 to 1999 and later becoming successively Vice-Chairman and a Vice-President of the Society. Everything she did for the Society was approached in a spirit of dedication and meticulous attention to detail – as Treasurer she familiarized herself with the intricacies of the Society’s accounts and balance sheets, her legal knowledge enabled her to grapple with the finer points of the Society’s constitution, and her fair-mindedness and common sense served her in good stead in her most recent office of Vice-President.

As a recognized authority on law librarianship and legal indexing, she was responsible for editing the Law Librarian...