

# ICRIS Informal Meeting Wellington, New Zealand 12 March 2013

**Present:** Mary Russell, International Coordinator, ANZSI; Heather Ebbs, ISC/SCI; Takashi Matsuura, Japan (representing CSI); Pilar Wyman, ASI

**Guests:** David Ream, ASI; Kay Schlembach, ASI; Nelly Bess, ANZSI

## 1. Welcome and Regrets

Mary Russell welcomed all representatives and guests. Regrets were sent by SI.

## 2. Introductions and Brief News from All Societies

**Heather Ebbs** described the forthcoming ISC/SCI conference and AGM to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 7 and 8 June 2013. Nancy Mulvany will be the keynote speaker. Other presenters include Pilar Wyman, Dave Ream, Elaine Menard, Caroline Deepveen and a panel speaking on indexing biographies, oral histories and memoirs. The conference is being held in conjunction with the Editors' Association of Canada, and attendees can go to sessions of either organization.

Heather also noted that ISC/SCI's website, revamped in 2012, now has a password-protected members' area that can be used for such things as sharing the newsletters of sister societies. The *Register of Indexers Available* is now solely online.

ISC/SCI's membership is small—generally around 120–125. It seems to be slipping a bit (now at 116). Heather asked whether other societies are experiencing the same.

In response, Mary noted that ANZSI is fairly stable at around 200. They have been up as high as 250 but that was uncommon. Membership fluctuates as people sometimes join temporarily so they can take courses at cheaper rates.

**Pilar Wyman** noted that ASI has just over 700 members, which is up a bit over recent years. A decade or more ago membership was as high as 1,000.

ASI revised its vision and mission statements last year. Their goal is to be a resource and source for quality indexing (not just indexers). Pilar has been speaking as president of ASI to increase awareness of the need for quality indexing as a means to ensure a place for indexing in ebooks. The work of DTTP is also having effect.

KeyWords is now monthly for the electronic version. There are still a couple of print issues each year. One ebook has been done and more are in the pipeline. Webinars are being done. Conference numbers seem to be down, perhaps because of the resources available online.

**Kay Schlembach** added that as the industry changes, the societies need to figure out how best to serve both the industry and indexers.

**Dave Ream** described the work being done by the IDPF Indexing Working Group. The specification for indexes for EPUB 3 was just finished being written a week or so ago and has gone to the IDPF board. It will be open for public review and comments before before the final vote.

**Takashi Matsuura** expressed his pleasure to be participating in this meeting and the conference. Indexing has a long history in Japan but there is no formal society of indexers there. He has studied indexes in classical Chinese texts and is here on behalf of CSI.

**Ann Kingdom's** report for SI (see Attachment A) was read aloud by Mary. One item that raised discussion was the SI's decision not to offer the Wheatley Award this year, citing its failure to live up to the founding hope of raising awareness of the value of good indexers creating good indexes. Comments included the following:

- ISC/SCI will be instituting an indexing award, the Ewart-Davulney, with the first award planned for 2014.
- Last year's ANZSI winner was a non-member. ANZSI also has a lifetime membership award, and last year established the Outstanding Contribution Award for non-members who have made a significant contribution to the society. Further, ANZSI regularly recognizes Quiet Achievers in Indexing in their Bulletin.
- A previous winner of ASI's Wilson award was also a non-member and ended up both joining and serving.
- The web indexing award initiated by ANZSI (then AusSI) and more recently handled by ASI is no longer.
- Perhaps the time has come for awards for the best print index replicated in an ebook as well as the best original index for an ebook, and perhaps best mash-up index.
- Conversely, it was suggested that the platform or medium shouldn't matter, although there may need to be a transitional phase of awards that consider both quality and medium.
- ASI's Wilson Award committee has been asked to consider including electronic indexes for the award; currently, the award is only for print indexes.
- Perhaps an award for an ebook index could transcend all societies and be sponsored by a global ebook publisher (e.g., Hachette). There are "big players" in the ebook and apps worlds realizing (through efforts such as DTF) that good indexing tools are needed.

**Mary Russell** had news about various ANZSI publications:

- *Indexers Available* is being revamped.
- Max McMaster has scanned all back issues of the ANZSI Bulletin going back to 1978. All issues are publically available online except for the most recent three. Volunteers were sought to index all these journals, and 30 members and non-members volunteered; each is doing one year, or two for the older issues. Mary R. established a stylesheet. Twelve years have been submitted thus far. It is proving to be a useful and interesting experience in terms of a group indexing project.
- John Simkin is writing a history of ANZSI, focusing on the first 30 years.
- Glenda Browne continues to work with IDPF on EPUBs.

In other news, an ANZSI survey in 2012 identified that the vast majority of members are just part-time indexers, doing only 1–5 books/year and with indexing as <20% of their income. The society itself had something of a financial management crisis when their treasurer died and a year’s finances had to be reconstructed, but everything is back in order.

Max McMaster and Mary Russell are writing a publication called *Assessing Your Index* aimed at editors and others. It includes criteria (best practices), how to educate someone on what makes a good index and good and bad examples.

### **3. International Agreement**

The International Agreement was finalized at the Brighton Triennial in 2013. No new points were raised at the current meeting.

### **4. Annual Formal ICRIS Meeting**

There has been a suggestion for an annual formal ICRIS meeting to be held at one or another society’s conference rather than these informal meetings at each society’s conference. At the current meeting, it was agreed that the informal meetings at each conference with the Triennial formal meeting work well. Representatives able to participate in the informal meetings in person can do so, and those who do not travel to any given conference can send a written report or perhaps participate electronically. Further, if one society’s conference was suggested as the venue for the “official” meeting in any given year, it could detract from international representation at another.

### **5. History of ICRIS**

Jill Halliday’s history of the international collaboration among indexing societies appeared in the September 2012 *The Indexer*.

### **6. ICRIS in Frankfurt**

Pilar Wyman attended the Frankfurt Book Fair and spoke about indexing at Tools of Change on the eve of the Fair. Her session was very successful, with many non-indexers eager to learn more about quality indexing, IDPF, etc.

### **7. Terminology for Websites**

Caroline Diepveen, Jochen Fassbender and others are working on indexing terminology to be included in website metadata to enable search hits on society sites.

### **8. Other ICRIS Meetings**

Tabled.

## **9. ICRIS Terms of Reference**

The informal ICRIS terms of reference document was accepted at the Triennial. One change has been suggested, to replace the membership for *The Indexer* with “two representatives of” rather than specifying the editor and the Around the World editor. This change was accepted by members present at the current meeting.

## **10. ICRIS Webpage**

Maureen MacGlashan had asked about removing the phrase “subject to ratification by the Societies” from the International Agreement as it is posted on the ICRIS webpage, given that SI, ASI, ISC/SCI and ANZSI have all ratified the agreement. Takashi Matsuura believes that the Chinese have also ratified it.

At the current meeting, it was agreed that the phrase “as agreed at the Brighton Triennial, 2013” could be used instead.

## **11. *The Indexer***

Heather read the report from Maureen MacGlashan (see Attachment B).

## **12. 2015 Triennial**

ANZSI has offered to host the 2015 Triennial and is still willing to do so, but the dates for that conference have now been fixed as being in early May 2015 in Canberra. The dates chosen are immediately following the ASI conference (for which dates have also been fixed) and are likely just a couple of weeks before the ISC/SCI conference, which is traditionally held in the last week of May or first week of June. Realistically, in terms of international attendance, Canberra may not be the most logical venue for the triennial. It was suggested that one of the other societies should perhaps host the 2015 Triennial, perhaps SI, especially if their conference will not be back to back with one of the other societies. (Note: CSI will be having their annual conference that year in October in Shanghai).

## **13. Next Meeting**

San Antonio, Wednesday, 17 April, 4:30 p.m.,

## Attachment A

### SI report for ANZSI conference 2013

Membership of SI seems to be holding up reasonably well, given the economic situation, though uncertainty about the future of indexing inevitably means that fewer people made redundant in other areas see it as a possible new career. The latest fees negotiation survey (which has not yet been properly analysed) also suggests that there is more pressure from clients to accept lower fees. However, it's not all gloom and doom; the majority of respondents felt they were being offered about the same amount of work (or more), with less than 20 percent feeling there was less work around.

Like any small society, we continue to struggle to fill key posts, and with two significant retirements from the Executive Board at this year's AGM, and two more next year, we need a supply of new blood to take over the running of the Society. There is, for instance, some reluctance amongst local groups to take on conference organization, despite the fact that much more is now done centrally in the office. And although our newsletter editor's retirement was known months ahead, it was not until the AGM that two new editors volunteered their services. Newer members may well have the relevant skills and experience, but are inevitably reluctant to take on too many commitments while trying to establish their indexing careers; those of us who are longer in the tooth have 'been there and got the T-shirt' (literally in many cases!) and are looking forward to winding down.

Like indexers the world over we are facing the challenge of new technology and our small Publishing Technology Group (PTG) has been working extremely hard in the background, putting together a website that aims to keep both publishers and indexers well informed about new developments. This has been available for members for some time (and for members of other indexing societies) and it is hoped that it will soon be made public, with a small part reserved for members only. (I understand Glenda will be saying more about the work of the PTG.)

In terms of training, regular improvements continue to be made to the SI online training course. Although the course has always concentrated on the basics of the indexing process rather than instructing students in the use of indexing software, newly qualified indexers nowadays need to be much more technically savvy, able to cope with new approaches and new technology. It is hoped that embedded indexing, for example, will eventually become a compulsory part of the course. Many newly qualified indexers do of course take their first step in CPD by attending a workshop on embedded indexing – either hosted by a local group or tagged onto the end of the annual conference. But arranging CPD for a small society with a scattered membership is always going to be a problem (even in a country the size of Britain). One answer to this is to make workshops available online, and this is just what we have done. Building on the success of the online tutorials, which are now a compulsory part of the training course, we have recently launched our first online workshop – 'How to edit an index; creating order out of chaos'. This is an expanded and updated version of a face-to-face workshop that the tutor has run successfully for many years.

Raising the profile of indexing is something we are all trying to do, particularly in the face of public ignorance and assumptions that free-text search is the answer to everything. The role of social media is of course becoming more important here, and our Twitter and Facebook accounts are updated by a team of two enthusiastic volunteers on a daily basis throughout the working week. We are also currently engaged in revising some of our publicity materials, including *Last but not Least*, our booklet on commissioning indexes, which will be distributed to many UK publishers as well as appearing on our website. Some useful publicity stemmed from a discussion about proofreading indexes on the email list of our sister organization, the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP). Displaying woeful ignorance amongst some editors, this has led to a series of articles by our Chair and three workshops specifically aimed at editors (with another due to be held at the SfEP's conference). All have been very well received and

helped to dispel some of the common myths about indexing. Another fruitful approach has been the development of links with some of the universities running courses on publishing; to date several groups of students have benefitted from talks from practising indexers. Hopefully they will remember to make the case for indexing when they find themselves in influential positions in publishing houses.

Do awards help to promote good indexing? The Wheatley Medal was established over 50 years ago by the then Library Association in association with the Society of Indexers. It is well known amongst indexers but, with a few exceptions, few publishers are aware of its existence. It has thus manifestly failed to live up to its proponents' hopes: encouraging publishers to use good indexers to compile high-quality indexes. Opinion within SI as to the relevance of the Wheatley is divided, but in the short term the Executive Board has taken the decision not to run the award this year. The suggestion that a new award for 'index-friendly' publishers should be set up met with considerable initial enthusiasm and an online survey was run last year in an attempt to identify a suitable recipient. In the first stage, members were asked to nominate those publishers they felt deserving of such an award, while the second stage asked them to rate these publishers on a range of criteria. However, the results of this were inconclusive, with only 10 per cent of the membership contributing to the second stage of the survey, and many publishers being rated by only one indexer. This was a useful exercise – perhaps more of a pilot project – and for the time being this initiative has therefore been laid to rest.

The website is usually the first port of call for anyone wanting to find out about indexing. We have been conscious that although it contains a wealth of material, it is not always as accessible as it might be, and some efforts have been made to revamp the navigation and make it easier for the main categories of website visitor to go straight to the pages that are most relevant to them. Keeping a website up to date and archiving older material is an ongoing task that again relies on committee chairs, etc. monitoring sections that are relevant to their responsibilities. A vital part of the website is the directory of 'Indexers Available', which is currently undergoing a major revamp. For various reasons, this has taken much longer than anticipated, but we are hopeful that when the new system is eventually launched it will enable indexers to specify their specialisms in more detail and help clients to identify the most appropriate person for each particular project.

This year our conference will take place in a purpose-built conference centre, complete with health spa and various other facilities. We hope that some of our colleagues from the other indexing societies will be able to join us there to 'revitalize our businesses and refresh our skills'.

*Ann Kingdom (SI Chair)*  
*1 March 2013*

## **Attachment B**

### ***The Indexer* report for ANZSI conference 2013**

#### ***The Indexer***

- a) We now have a new Webmaster – Rebecca Linford who was the last (I think) winner of the WEB Indexing SIG prize, and was for a time moderator of the SIG
- b) Madeleine Davis (many thanks) has agreed to take on responsibility for what we might loosely call Antipodean reviews.
- c) Nic Nicholas (SI), as you know, has been helping on marketing of *The Indexer*.
- d) She has opened an Indexer Twitter account at [https://twitter.com/The\\_Indexer](https://twitter.com/The_Indexer). Do, please, do a few tweets!
- e) The ‘Newcomers’ Collection has been selling well, and I’ve had good feedback plus, of course, the odd criticism (sometime misplaced because of a misunderstanding of what the Collection was intended to do. I won’t have the full picture until I see the report Pierke Bosschieter is doing for the April *Indexer*.
- f) I attended the MLA (Modern Language Association) Conference in Boston at the beginning of the year. As I have reported in the March *Indexer* this was a most interesting occasion, with some positive results.

Maureen MacGlashan