

Indexing societies around the world: a brief survey

American Society for Indexing (ASI)

Peter Rooney (ASI) writes:

Founded: 1968, under the name American Society of Indexers; first proposed by Theodore Hines, Robert Palmer, and students at the Columbia University library school.

Goals/mission: To promote excellence in indexing and to increase awareness of the value of well-written and well-designed indexes. ASI serves indexers, librarians, abstractors, editors, publishers, database producers, data searchers, product developers, technical writers, academic professionals, researchers and readers, and others concerned with indexing.

Membership: Over 600 members (as of May 2011), including 18 institutional members. All states of the United States are represented, and several members reside overseas. Freelancers and staff indexers are represented in about equal proportions.

Meetings/activities: An annual conference is held in late April or early May. It rotates among mid-sized cities in the East Coast, Central and West Coast regions, and runs for about four days.

Branches/chapters: Most ASI members are also members of a local chapter in their geographic area ranging from New England to Southern California, the Southeast to the Pacific Northwest. Chapters meet at least twice a year, and many have all-day meetings. Some members also belong to one or more of the current 13 special interest groups (SIGs), ranging from Business or Culinary to Taxonomies and Controlled Vocabularies, and Web Indexing. (For further information on the SIGs, see 'Around the world' in *The Indexer* 29(2), 84–5.)

Significant achievements: Generally speaking, ASI defends and safeguards the professional interests of indexers; and cooperates with other professional organizations in information science. ASI publishes its bulletin, *Key Words*, four times a year, having a subscription of about 1,000. The Society offers an online distance-learning training course in indexing for learning and updating indexing skills. Various types of insurance are obtainable through ASI, from UBI, a commercial insurance company. ASI continues its friendly relations with all sister indexing societies and organizations, and participates in editing *The Indexer*.

Additional information: www.asindexing.org – offers indexing resources and contact information for indexers; the site also has many special areas for members only.

Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers (ASAIB)

Madely du Preez (ASAIB) writes:

Founded: 1994

Goals/mission: To serve the interests of all indexers and bibliographers in South Africa and to support all indexing and bibliography activities in the country.

Membership: 186 members from all over South Africa; 66 members' names appear in the ASAIB Directory of Freelance Indexers. There is a great diversity in the subject fields ASAIB members index.

Branches/chapters: The Western Cape Branch is situated in Cape Town. The members of the ASAIB executive committee live and work in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Meetings/activities: The ASAIB executive committee organizes an annual conference and an annual general meeting. The Western Cape Branch has more regular meetings – this is due to local needs and indexer interests. ASAIB offers indexing training workshops twice a year. These workshops are well attended and quite popular among South African indexers. There is now a Facebook page for ASAIB.

Publications ASAIB has a quarterly online newsletter for its members.

Additional information: www.asaib.org.za/;
<http://tinyurl.com/ASAIBfacebook>

Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI)

Alan Eddy (ANZSI) writes:

Founded: An Australian Society of Indexers was formed in 1972, to help its members overcome the problems of working in isolation. By 1975 there were 78 individual and corporate members resident in most of the Australian states, a constitution had been adopted and planning future directions and activities of the Society were well advanced. In April 1976, at a meeting in Melbourne attended by 22 people, the Australian Society of Indexers was dissolved and the Society of Indexers in Australia was established. The new society held quarterly meetings at which guest speakers delivered papers, and a newsletter became a lifeline that linked the widely spread membership. Branches were established in Victoria (1976), New South Wales (NSW, 1989), Australian Capital Territory (ACT, 1993), New Zealand (2004) and Queensland (2008). There are corresponding groups in Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. The name of the society was expanded in 2004 when the New Zealand Branch was established. It became an incorporated society in 2010.

Goals/mission:

- To promote standards and improve the quality of indexing in Australia and New Zealand.
- Promote the training, continuing professional development, status and interests of indexers in Australia and New Zealand.

- Act as an advisory body on indexing to which authors, editors, publishers and others may apply for guidance.
- Provide opportunities for those interested in and connected with indexing to meet and exchange information, ideas and experiences relating to all aspects of indexing.
- Establish and maintain relationships between the Society and other bodies with related interests.
- Publish information in accord with the foregoing aims.

Membership: 222 (as of April 2011), comprising 218 personal members (including five Honorary Life members) and four corporate members. Branch memberships were Australian Capital Territory Region, 38; New South Wales, 45; New Zealand, 26; Queensland, 29; Victoria, 77; unattached to a branch, 7. *ANZSI Newsletter* November/December 2007 included a summary of the main responses to a mail survey of members. The typical respondent was a freelancer, in their 50s, spending two to three days a week doing back-of-book indexing, with some journal or database indexing and annual reports.

Meetings/activities: Biennial conferences have provided the main opportunities to get together, and the ACT and NSW branches run some combined events. The Council of ANZSI, Inc. comprises office bearers and ordinary members elected at the annual meeting; for practical reasons they are members of the branch which for the time being exercises the role and responsibilities set out for the Council. The presidents of the other branches are members *ex officio*. The procedures of the Council are designed to circulate papers and reports for comment by all the branches for due consideration before decisions are made. New ground was broken in 2011 when a day-long meeting of the full Council was arranged at an airport motel in Melbourne. Most fares and accommodation were met from the Council's budget, and the effectiveness of face-to-face interactions in contrast to e-mails and phone conversations was plain to see. The branch presidents who had flown in the evening before enjoyed the bonus of pre-meeting discussions. Annual full meetings are planned after the success of this innovation.

Registration: ANZSI, Inc. provides a Registration for its back-of-book indexers. In the absence of formal courses leading to tertiary qualifications in indexing, Registration sets a standard of demonstrated expertise and experience, and also performs these functions:

- recognizes the quality of an indexer's work as assessed by a panel of experienced indexers
- acknowledges the professionalism of an indexer through the requirement that only published indexes are reviewed
- recognizes that having an index published attests to the indexer's ability to perform work under marketplace conditions, constraints and deadlines
- assures potential clients that a registered indexer has met established criteria for acceptable indexing
- assures potential clients that a registered indexer has current indexing experience, through the requirement that registration be renewed at set periods
- indicates a general level of competency, measured against accepted indexing practice and agreed criteria.

Registration is granted for a period of five years, and can be renewed for successive five-year periods by providing evidence of continued work in indexing. Details about applications and assessment, and further information, are given in the website.

Significant achievements: Recent achievements are lobbying Australasian Reporting Awards Limited, an independent not-for-profit volunteer organization that has been concerned since 1950 about the quality of financial and business reporting. It makes general and special awards annually for reports which satisfy quality criteria. An index to a report has not been a criterion, but ANZSI, Inc. hopes to remedy that. Additionally, the Society has made a written submission to a current federal government inquiry into the impact of ebooks on book publishing and retail sales of books in Australia.

Publications: The ANZSI newsletter (free to members) appears 11 times a year.

Additional information: www.anzsi.org/site/ – provides a wealth of information about the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers, Inc., for members and the world at large. Pages include handy tutorial references for indexing practice, branch meetings and social events, conferences, training courses, and the Society's publications. A members' section gives access to a directory of members, Council and branch committee minutes, and a discussion facility.

China Society of Indexing (CSI)

Translated by Yuemei Yan, revised by Puqun Li:

Founded: 1991, in Shanghai, as a nationwide nonprofit public organization in the fields of index research and of text compilation. The Society runs under the supervision of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau in Beijing and is affiliated with Fudan University. The current chairperson of the Society is Professor Gui Yonghao, the vice president of Fudan University.

Goals/mission: CSI's mission and its members' codes of conduct are based on the ideas of 'sincerity, truth-seeking, the spirit of exploitation, and professional dedication'. Its aims include:

- promoting index theory research
- promoting index compilation and publication
- the training of professional indexers
- enhancement of academic exchange at home and abroad.

Membership: More than 1,000 members (as of 2011) across the country in the service fields of library and information, academic research, and press and publishing.

Meetings/activities: CSI holds an annual general meeting jointly with an academic conference. It makes regular indexing exhibitions and index achievement assessments, and it also hosts frequent talks and seminars on indexing. CSI is a signatory of the International Agreement governing relations between the national indexing societies. There are links from the CSI website to the websites of its sister societies.

Branches/chapters: The Society's organization includes the Secretariat and several specialized committees, each of which is respectively responsible for academic research, compilation and translation publishing, education and training, and advertisement and liaison.

Significant achievements: The Society has published a series of books on index research, such as *Index: past, present, and future*, *On index and the methods of indexing*, *Indexing automation, indexing techniques and standards*, and *Newspaper indexes and news databases*. Since 2003, it has published a quarterly journal *China Index* (《中国索引》) (available on the CSI website, www.cnindex.fudan.edu.cn/). In recent years, CSI has been promoting index standardization and database construction in China and has made positive achievements, producing national indexing guidelines, *Regulations on index compilation (general rules)* (GB/T22466-2008), which was officially endorsed by the Standardization Administration Board of China on 2 November 2008, coming into effect on 1 April 2009. The document, modelled on ISO 999, includes chapters on Subject contents, Normative citation standards, Terms and definitions, Index functions, Index types, Index designing, Index entry and its compilation, Referencing, Index entry arrangement, Index formatting, and Quality control. For a full account, see the September 2009 issue of *The Indexer*, **29**(3): 101–2.

CSI guest-edited the September 2009 issue of *The Indexer* (**29**(3)).

Additional information: www.cnindex.fudan.edu.cn

Deutsches Netzwerk der Indexer (DNI)

Jochen Fassbender (NIN) writes:

Founded: 2004

Goals/mission: to promote the concept and professional status of indexing in the German-speaking world and to make the occupational image of the indexer better known and more recognizable.

The modern book trade began in Germany, so Germany has the longest book tradition, but as far as indexing is concerned it remains a developing country. The DNI organizes talks and seminars. Its members, currently around 30 in number, advise publishers and authors, and offer indexing in various specialized fields. In addition it maintains close relations with indexing societies in other countries.

Achievements: In the medium term, the DNI continues to grow, aiming to offer indexing for as wide a spectrum of subject areas as possible. It also plans further seminars and workshops for the target groups of publishing staff, freelance editors and authors.

Additional information: www.d-indexer.org supplies information on indexing, and important topics are addressed under the heading *Fragen*. The section headed '*Ressourcen*' includes a bibliography of German-language literature and German-context works, going back to the 16th-century encyclopaedia pioneer Konrad Gessner.

Indexing Society of Canada / Société canadienne d'indexation (ISC/SCI)

Jennifer Hedges (ISC/SCI) writes:

Founded: 1977, as the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada/Société canadienne pour l'analyse de documents (IASC/SCAD). A number of organizations played a role in the formation of our society, from the Index Committee of the Bibliographical Society of Canada to the Canadian Library Association and the School of Library Science (now the Faculty of Information) at the University of Toronto. Our current name was adopted in 2006 to reflect the fact that indexing is now the major specialty of our members.

Goals/mission: To encourage the production and use of indexes and abstracts; promote the recognition of indexers and abstractors; improve indexing and abstracting techniques; and provide a means of communication among individual indexers and abstractors across Canada.

Membership: 128 members (as of August 2011), of whom 121 are Canadian. The remaining members are from the United States (6) and Italy (1). The majority of members are individuals (freelancers). Eight members represent institutions such as Hansard Services and schools of library and information science. Seven are full-time students.

Branches/chapters: The country is divided into four regions for representation on the national executive: British Columbia, Central Canada, Eastern Canada, and Prairies and Northern Canada.

Meetings/activities: Geographical distances are too vast for most regions to meet outside our annual general meeting, which is part of our annual conference. However, indexers in Toronto, Ontario, and Vancouver, British Columbia, do meet regularly. In addition, we have an email forum that members may join. Executive meetings are often aided by Skype and other conferencing communications, which we also deployed at our recent conference using mobile phones as well as multiple conferencing devices to pull off a cross-continent presentation. The annual conference takes place in late spring, around the end of May or beginning of June. The location tends to be in one of the larger cities: Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal or Ottawa. The location and date of the conference of the Editors' Association of Canada are considered when planning our conference as there is quite a bit of overlap in the membership of the two groups.

Significant achievements: As is evident from the name, we are a bilingual society. To the extent possible, given our small numbers, we attempt to provide information to our members in Canada's two official languages, English and French. Something else unique in our society is our magpie pin, inspired by the keynote address at our 2009 conference. Katherine Barber, founding editor-in-chief of the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, entertained us with a wide-ranging talk on the connections between magpies and indexing. To see the pin, visit our website.

Publications: ISC/SCI publishes a quarterly electronic newsletter.

Additional information: www.indexers.ca

Netherlands Indexing Network (NIN)

Caroline Diepeveen and Jacqueline Pitchford-Belder (NIN) write:

Founded: 2004, as an informal network of indexers working in the Netherlands or the Dutch language. The work could be indexes for books, journals or loose-leaf publications, as well as indexes for electronic media, such as websites and databases. The activities of NIN are carried out on a voluntary basis.

Goals/mission: NIN aims to advocate for the interests of indexers by promoting awareness of indexing as a profession among the general public, and especially among publishers and ICT-firms; promoting contacts between indexers in the Netherlands and abroad, and liaising with relevant organizations in the Netherlands; and promoting the quality of indexing in the Netherlands by offering workshops, conferences, mutual learning, mentoring schemes and so forth.

Membership: Ten members (as of June 2011), nine of whom work from the Netherlands and one from Germany. Apart from indexing services, a number of members offer other information services, such as editing, web editing, writing, abstracting, translation and desk research. Membership is open to professional indexers in the Netherlands, or anyone wishing to become a professional indexer who works in the Netherlands or in the Dutch language. There are no special categories or levels of membership.

Meetings/activities: There is no official annual national meeting, but in general members meet one another once a year and occasionally for special events or activities organized by NIN. Because of the geographical spread of members, meetings sometimes take place via Skype.

Significant achievements: In September 2010 NIN organised the annual conference of the Society of Indexers in Middelburg, the Netherlands. For a report of the conference, see <http://tinyurl.com/NINMiddelburg>. In 2006 NIN organized a workshop on web indexing. A team of three NIN indexers was awarded the 2011 Wheatley Medal.

Publications With effect from October 2011, NIN publishes a quarterly electronic newsletter.

Additional information: www.indexers.nl

Society of Indexers (SI) (United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland)

Pam Scholefield (SI) writes:

Founded: 1957; the Society is the only autonomous professional body for indexers in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Goals/mission:

- Promote improved standards and techniques in all forms of indexing.
- Provide, promote and recognize facilities for the initial training of new indexers and for further training at more advanced levels.

- Establish criteria for assessing the conformity of indexes to recognized standards.
- Establish and maintain procedures for conferring upon members recognized professional status.
- Conduct and promote research into indexing and related matters.
- Publish and disseminate guidance, information and ideas concerning indexing.
- Promote among indexers, authors, publishers and other interested persons and organizations relationships conducive to the advancement of good indexing.
- Enhance awareness and recognition of professionally produced indexes and the role of indexers in the analysis, organization and accessibility of recorded knowledge and ideas.

Membership: Approximately 500, broken down as follows: Members, 123; MSocInd, 107; MSocInd (Adv), 71; Fellows, 61; Students, 145. There are 58 members based outside the UK/Ireland from Argentina, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA.

Meetings/activities: The Annual General Meeting is usually held in the margin of the annual conference which rotates between the local groups. Timing of the conference varies from one year to the next.

Branches/chapters: 16 local groups within the UK plus the Irish group.

Significant achievements: The first of the indexing societies, SI has over the past half century played a leading role in advancing the cause of indexing and indexers. Its achievements over that period include continuous publication of *The Indexer* first as the Society house journal then as the international journal of indexing, the Wheatley Medal (first awarded in 1962), annual conferences almost from the start with the first 'international' conference being held in 1978 at Roehampton to mark the Society's 21st birthday, and training courses the first of which took place in the spring of 1958. Training has always featured prominently in the Society, with its current 'Training in Indexing' distance learning course (available to other societies) acknowledged as a leader in the field. SI has also led the way in developing a system of indexing qualifications. It has also played an enthusiastic role in the development of liaison between the indexing societies, in particular through the International Agreement and ICRIS (International Committee for relations between the Indexing Societies).

Additional information www.indexers.org.uk