

iSignpost

INDEXING SPECIALISTS

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Embracing New Technology

From papyrus to the Internet - How things change!

Some of the first known indexes were for papyrus scrolls and consisted of a slip of paper (called a "sillybus") hanging from the end so that the scroll lying on the shelf could easily be identified. (Caligula apparently had such a "sillybus" to his hit-list for assassinations!)

Later on, book indexes of names and subjects were put together using individual cards or slips of paper, in cardboard boxes. The cards or slips were arranged in alphabetical order in the box then the index was typed out on a typewriter. The typesetter worked from the hard copy to arrange his print and lo, the index was published. Mind you, this system is still occasionally used today.

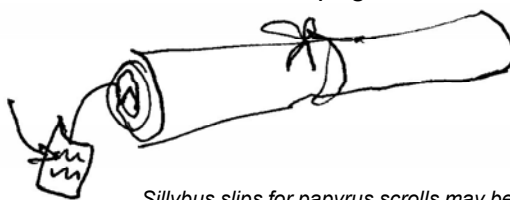
Now the process takes place electronically (though not automatically) – entries chosen by the indexer are keyed into a computer, sorted and edited, and e-mailed to the publisher. The printer then completes the electronic process.

At Indexing Specialists we have embraced many new aspects of technology. We offer the facility to accept A4 text in PDF format and print it here for indexing. We also produce online indexes for websites and CD-ROMs, for an example check out our website at www.indexing.co.uk.

We also offer a website design and maintenance service, see page 2 for details.

Juggling journals

Recently two journals came in for indexing, each containing nearly 500 articles. A subject index and author index were required for each within two weeks. The deadline was met but the project tested the new version of Macrex indexing software in its handling of small and large capitals (for authors) and some unusual formatting. We do love a challenge!



S.M.M. 2002

Sillybus slips for papyrus scrolls may be available on request

What to look for in This Issue

- Historical perspectives, technological change 1
- The importance of indexing 2
- Website design service 2
- Communication and changes to proofs 3
- Some interesting books indexed 3
- Online indexing 4
- A poem to chortle over 4

Focus on Indexers



Milla Hills

With a background in biology and computing Milla was recently asked to lead a team indexing an encyclopaedia of environmetrics (statistics and the environment). her first experience of controlling a large project.

After gaining a degree in biology from Sussex, two years experience in a microbiology lab and a brief foray into the world of teaching, Milla went to work for a large engineering consultancy, eventually becoming head of the computer support department.

Milla joined Indexing Specialists in 1997 to strengthen the science team, but she also covers computing, childcare and many other subjects. At that time IS had just set up a website and with her computing experience she took it over, redesigning the site when we purchased our domain name indexing.co.uk.

Milla has produced newsletters for several charities and has frequently helped with this publication. She took over as editor from last issue.

She finds part time work here fits in perfectly with her children aged eight and one.

The importance of indexing - an individual perspective

Having recently left education and research, my mind is still fresh with memories of endless searches through mounds of literature for a specific subject or topic, the value of a good index is paramount. With time being of the essence, "if it's not in the index it's not in the book" was often a motto. On this basis, much material both printed and electronic (which may or may not have contained what I was looking for) went totally discarded. This was equally true of Internet searches and highlights the indisputable importance of well structured indexes to home-in on relevant information.

Lyn Nesbitt-Smith

Indexing Specialists enters the Stamp Marquet!

What have Russian stamps and marquetry in common? They are both subjects of recent websites created for clients by Indexing Specialists. We took over the website for a well-known philatelist, Trevor Pateman, and managed it throughout most of last year. We are currently engaged in producing a German version of the site. We have also worked with a local business, The Veneer Workshop Ltd, to produce an online version of their brochure, publicising their fine craftsmanship to an international market. We look forward to offering this service to other clients during 2002.

Visit these websites at:
www.trevorpateman.co.uk and
www.veneerworkshop.co.uk

Andy Bicknell

Final Page Proofs- Keeping in touch

As writing the index is one of the last things to be done in getting a book into print, and deadlines are often tight, it is tempting for the publisher to send proofs to the indexer before they have been finalised. The thinking is that the quicker we get started, the quicker the index will be finished.

However this is often a false assumption, working from early proofs can lead to long delays. On one memorable occasion we had completed the index to a large scientific encyclopaedia before the publishers realised that many of the diagrams had to be moved, and the text reorganised around them, as well as numerous other changes. This meant hours of checking the new proofs against the old to find the changes, then more hours seeing where this affected the index. This delayed completion and added substantially to the cost.

Some changes obviously affect the index more than others. Where each change affects only a few pages it is not difficult to cope with, or if a whole page is added or deleted we can automatically renumber from that point. However if half a page is added near the beginning of the book, it could affect the index for the rest of the book! Early proofs may also not have been checked for accuracy, in the spelling of names for instance, and when these are later spotted and corrected who thinks to correct the index to match?

Sometimes corrections have to be made after the proofs have gone to the indexer. The delay can be minimised by telling us as soon as possible, in detail, where changes to the text occur, and by sending revised proofs where necessary. We all want to achieve a good index, on time and on budget; effective communication does help.

For the King's Pleasure

Tracy Dolphin recently indexed a book of this title, a beautiful book about the furnishing and decorating of George IV's apartments at Windsor Castle written by Sir Hugh Roberts. The publishers, Royal Collection Enterprises, were very pleased with the resulting index, which ran to 14 pages. Tracy enjoyed indexing the book, which she describes as very detailed and well researched.

Snippets

- Welcome to Keith Hood who has come from a telecommunications background and joins our business studies/finance team.
- Goodbye to Maresa Bossano and Shauna Parker, we wish them well.

Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club

Lisa Kenwright, one of our longest serving indexers, was delighted to index *Albion - The First 100 Years*, by P. Camillin and S. Weir, a book of great local interest, and particularly to her husband who has been a lifetime supporter of the Albion. He was able to help her sort out the complicated league structure. The Albion have been through some hard times, but recently they have done well and are now near the top of the second division. Lisa discovered while indexing the book that in 1983 they reached the FA cup final. Their supporters doubtless look forward to equally successful times ahead.



S.M.M. 2002

Online indexing

Automated keyword searches on websites have serious drawbacks when it comes to finding your way around online books and articles. The texts will often use different words and phrases to describe the same subject. For example, anyone writing about selling over the Internet and related topics could use the terms e-commerce, Internet selling, online business, web-based companies, dot.coms, B2B and so on. If you searched for all the possible combinations in a series of general business publications, you could end up with thousands of references. Many of them might be similar to this :- *'with the rise in e-business a fact of life...'* and it is very hard to track down exactly what you are looking for in a plethora of trivial references.

A well constructed index avoids inclusion of passing references as might occur with automated indexing methods. On the other hand, it may include terms not used explicitly in the text, if the information is still relevant. All related references are brought together with sub-entries to organise them, and *see/see also* references to lead the user to related subjects.

The above is true of a written book index but an online index is even better, one click takes you straight to the topic of interest, by means of embedded tags. Although the cost is higher, this combines the ease of use of an automated system with the consistency, comprehensiveness and accuracy of a well written index.

For examples of an online index see our website www.indexing.co.uk and click on the INDEX link.

Indexing Specialists

Managing Editor - Richard Raper
202 Church Road, Hove,
East Sussex, BN3 2DJ, UK
Tel.: +44 (0)1273 738299
Fax: +44 (0)1273 323309
E-mail: signpost@indexing.co.uk

Ode to a spell Checker

*Eye halve a spelling checker
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marks four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea
Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong or write
It shows me strait a weigh
As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee four two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong
Eye have run this poem threw it
Eye am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My checker tolled me sew.*

Thanks to Ingrid Lock for sending us this gem

Christmas Treat



Some of the staff of Indexing Specialists and their partners enjoying an Indonesian feast at the Bali Brasserie.

Editor for this edition: Milla Hills

Last Word

Entry in a Jesuit encyclopaedia -
Women see under Sin