Indexing in the '60s, ff

Hazel K. Bell

Abstract: Describes the development of the career of a freelance indexer and of the Society of Indexers from the 1960s, and the editing of *The Indexer* from the '70s to the '90s.

I took up the craft of indexing in 1964, and joined the Society of Indexers (SI) in its seventh year, 1965, in a scene nearly as different from today's [written in 2009]socially as it was technically. I had left university in 1957 with three black marks against me for the employment market: I was a woman, an arts graduate, and married. No employer wanted such a creature. My husband attracted some admiration even for condoning my search for work; it was not accepted on all sides at that time that wives might take work outside the home. Eventually I did find a job as a proofreader in a printing press, one that was producing scholarly editions of the works of Pope and Shakespeare; but quickly lost it, as the printers' union restricted the work to males who had served a seven-year apprenticeship: which I was not and had not. I took a series of odd jobs, eventually being accepted as a teacher (untrained), then gave up outside work to produce and bring up my children.

When my first son started attending nursery school, in 1964, and his younger brother slept at that time, giving me some precious hours to myself, I began to feel the need for some form of skilled work that I could do at home, both financially and to preserve some grip on sanity and the world outside. I saw reports in the papers of the agencies which were then being set up to provide part-time work at home for women in my position, such as A F E M — Agency for the Employment of Mothers Limited. The types of work they offered included indexing. To a compulsive listmaker, cross-word puzzle addict, and tracer of single themes through literary works, this seemed tailor-made for me.

The Society of Indexers

The Society of Indexers had been founded in 1957, after Gilfred Norman Knight, a former Barrister and civil servant, who had been a freelance, solitary indexer for the previous thirty years, wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement*[1] suggesting the formation of such a society. Replies came in, Knight invited


Gilfred Norman Knight
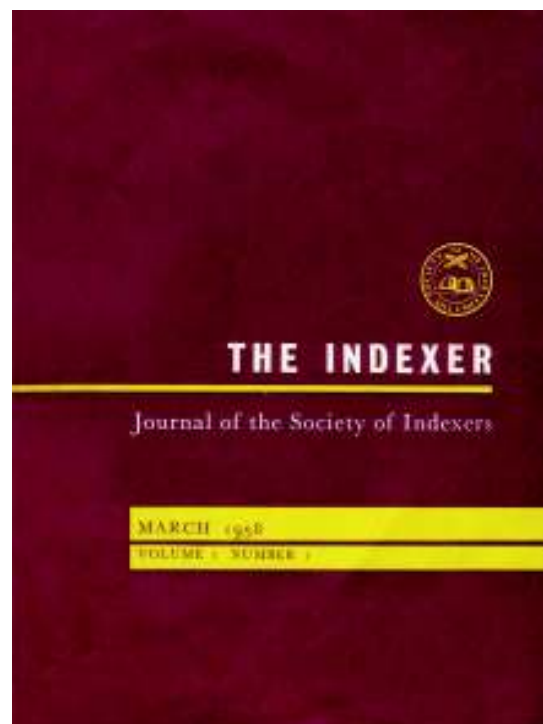
the writers to luncheons at his London club, and SI was inaugurated fifteen months later at a meeting held in the National Book League, with 134 individual members and 23 institutional. It was hailed by a leading article in *The Times*, no less, celebrating 'the newly formed Society of Indexers'[2]. In March 1958 the first issue of *The Indexer* appeared, boasting a page-long 'Message from the Prime Minister',[3] Harold Macmillan.

I wrote to SI to ask how to start being an indexer, and received a helpful letter from the then Secretary, Alan Baker. He told me "There is no formal training for indexing work", recommending that beginners should read four books: Gordon Carey's *Making an Index*,[4] two by Robert Collison —*Indexers and Indexing*[5] and *Indexing Books,*[6] and the British Standard 377:1964, R*ecommendation for the Preparation of Indexes.*

About fees, he wrote:

Fees for indexing are very difficult to fix because there are so many variables. As a rough guide we recommend payment by the hour: For a `light' work requiring no more than an index of names we recommend a minimum of 10/- per hour (that's 50p today), for works of semi-scholarship requiring an index of names and concepts 12/6d per hour, and for works of scholarship requiring specialist knowledge 15/- (75p) per hour'.
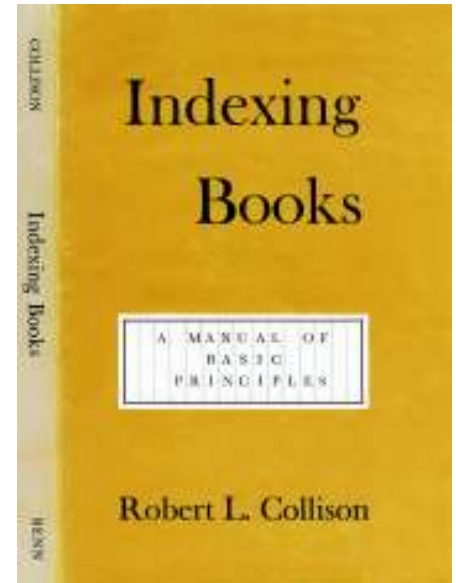
Freelance indexing

I studied the four books and sent off letters to publishers, seeking commissions. My pleas were luckily successful, and I was asked to index a biography of the first woman doctor in England.[7]

It was necessary to provide myself with the tools of my new trade. This was, of course, long before the advent of personal computers. Indexers mostly worked on cards, normally 5" x 3", writing an entry on a card, and arranging them in alphabetical order in wooden or metal trays that were nicknamed shoeboxes — or, indeed, in actual shoeboxes, which would serve the purpose well for as long as they lasted. I obtained cards by the hundreds, cut for me by printers. Indexers would also buy tabbed cards to mark the alphabetical divisions of the set of cards in the tray. I used coloured cards for specific categories of entry: say, blue for major entries, yellow for placenames, green for book or journal titles.

For economy, cards were reused. When a job was finished, the entries on the cards no longer needed for reference, a regular chore was to cross through the entries on the cards, and invert them, or turn them, for reuse. For brief entries, the same cards could be used for four indexes; on both sides and each way up!

Sets of index cards usually needed to be typed out on paper to send to the printer. Then, typing was done noisily on manually operated typewriters, with an inked ribbon running along the top for the metal letters to hit. When the ribbon was worn out, a new one had to be inserted: an intricate and messy procedure. If extra copies were needed, sheets of carbon paper had to be placed between the pages of typing paper. Tiny, flimsy pieces of special paper had to be placed above errors to type over again to correct them — on each copy separately. Then Tippex came on the market; little bottles of opaque white fluid that you painted over typing errors. Eventually electric typewriters made typing easier and faster; and at last the photocopier offered an alternative to the use of carbon paper. To get photocopies, I had to find which local shops or offices provided this service, and take my original there, paying 10p or 12p per sheet copies.

Even typing seemed advanced technology. Looking through old files to prepare this talk, I was surprised — and frustrated — to find how many letters from SI officers were handwritten.

I worked exhaustively on that first index, and sent the extremely over-detailed result to the author, who wrote to me, 'I have checked
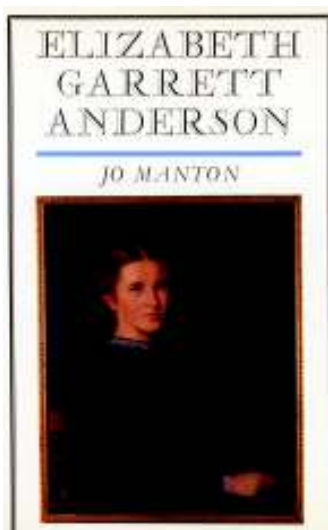
through the index and it seems to me admirable ... If you want at any time to give my name as a reference to publishers or authors, please do'. Triumphantly I sent off applications for work citing this reference, and indeed obtained further commissions. BUT, eleven days after the author's letter I received another from the publishers, quite different in tone: 'We had it cast-off by the printer. It makes 20 pages of two-column small print! ... this is far too much ... it is much too detailed for any likely reader or consulter of the book.' The book was published with a ten-page index (not reduced by me). Perhaps this illustrates two received truths about indexing: that novice indexers tend to over-index, and that authors may regard no detail of their work as too insignificant to be indexed.

I was then able, though, to write to the Women's Home-work agencies, saying that I had had an index published, and I received work from these sources — with the agencies taking their commission from the pay. I also obtained work through the SI Panel that recommended indexers to publishers, which asked for $2^1/_2$ % of the fee for work so obtained to be donated to SI.

Indexing at home with small children did of course have its own problems. Not Fiddling with Mummy's Cards was their major taboo; especially after one child was found about to extract all the pink ones from a set ready for typing. They had their own "indexes", old cards of mine in shoe-boxes, which they removed, scribbled on and replaced as to the manner born — which indeed they were. A two-year-old made a great impression at the infant clinic, looking at a tray of record cards and lisping, 'Is that the lady's index?' At that time there were many women so placed: indexing was in part a cottage industry, its freelance practitioners predominantly female, working at home. Even the words `pin money' were sometimes heard.

When my youngest child started school, in 1973, I had compiled 88 indexes, and found the work and its circumstances so congenial that I did not return to fulltime teaching as planned, but remained a home-based, freelance indexer.

Soft texts

I came to prefer, and to list as my subject specialisms, humanities, narrative texts – biographies and histories, which treat of people, their experience and relationships. I call these soft texts, as distinct from dry, documentary texts to be found in science, technology and medicine, composed of discrete (ETE) units, and usually having standardized terminology and established formal structure. I particularly enjoyed the devising of subtle subheadings for individual situations in soft texts, which, as Hans Wellisch wrote, "provide an opportunity for the indexer to be creative in paraphrasing the text", supplying terms that express the context concisely and precisely, and match the tenor of the text.[8]

A disadvantage of indexing personal texts is that it can lead to feelings of guilt at invading privacy or causing distress. Indexing a history of the World War II Resistance movement, based on newly accessed records, I was horribly aware that the relatives of Gestapo victims might learn here for the first time the exact, awful details of their fates. Indexing the love letters of a mystic poet, intended for no third eye, let alone publication, made me feel a most intrusive voyeur as I sought to reduce outpourings of spiritual ecstasy to precise terms.[9] That index, though, did bring about a memorable sequel. I was invited to the press launch of the book, and introduced to the editor, a florid Lebanese. He bowed low and profusely kissed my hand, as he said, "for your beautiful index". A rare reward for indexing, I'm sure.

Society development

The development of the Society of Indexers did not tally with its august origins — London clubs, National Book League, *Times* leader, letter from the Prime Minister ... It was small and voluntary, and had no premises. Meetings were held in London, usually as guests of the Library Association, or for small committees, in members' houses. I lived 20 miles north of London, and was able to attend the meetings. In 1976 I was appointed a member of the Board of Assessors, that considered whether indexes submitted by members showed them to be worthy of Registration. Thus I first got to know those stalwart personalities of SI's early years: the indefatigable and ebullient John Gordon, the vigorous and forthright Elizabeth Wallis, and surely the world's most fanatic, dogmatic proofreader, Neil Fisk.

Communication between meetings was only by post or telephone. We had to watch expenses carefully, and tried to make long-distance calls only in offpeak periods — that is, out of office hours, when the home-based are trying to lead their home lives, their working papers put away. Publications relevant for many of us to read had to be passed on from reader to reader by post, expensively, with about a week between each name on the circulation list.

John Gordon

Elizabeth Wallis

The 21st year of SI, 1978, was cataclysmic both for the society and for my own involvement with it. First, Leonard Montague Harrod, who had been editor of *The Indexer* for fourteen years, suddenly resigned, because of family circumstances; at the same time his deputy editor, Mary Piggot, had sustained head injuries in a traffic accident and could not take over editing the journal. A new editor was urgently needed. A call for nominations went out, accompanied by a list of requirements for the post, and I volunteered. My only editorial experience was with our local consumer group's magazine and the newsletter of National Housewives Register (both voluntary posts), but I found that I loved editing — assembling the parts, tailoring them, and arranging them to form a coherent whole — and eagerly seized the opportunity. So far as I know there was no other candidate; I was elected *Indexer* editor in May 1978 — which meant that I also became a member of SI's Council.

Editing *The Indexer*

My predecessor as editor had given me five sheets of instructions couched in spidery handwriting, so difficult to read that they could not be referred to for quick guidance. To know how long an article might prove in print, I had to `cast off' by counting the characters in each of ten lines and multiplying the average by the estimated number of lines in the typescript. Makeup was done by cutting up the galley proofs with scissors and pasting them with Cow Gum onto page grids.

In July 1978 SI held its first international conference, in Roehampton, South London, where I met Norman Knight (then in a wheelchair), as well as two speakers who were to become, in my view, the greatest contributors *The Indexer* has had: William Heckscher and Hans Wellisch, born respectively in Germany and Austria before the rise of the Nazi Party, both by then residents of the United States. The conference was also attended by representatives from the American Society of Indexers, which had affiliated to SI in 1972 (that was Dorothy Thomas), from the Australian Society, which affiliated in 1977, represented by Jean Hagger, and the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada (Peter Greig), who all read congratulatory messages on SI's Coming of Age. Peter Greig had several meetings with SI Officers, and the affiliation of the Canadian Society to SI was settled during that conference.

Volume 11, no. 2 of *The Indexer*, the first issue under my editorship, was due for publication in October, and had the Proceedings of this conference to prepare and include. The paper given by Wellisch, "Early Multilingual and Multiscript Indexes in Herbals", ran to 22 pages, including 10 illustrations, each with a caption, 21 footnotes, and 45 references with superscripts.[10] I had never laid out anything so complicated — and indeed haven't since!

The instructions my predecessor as editor had given me did not cover my particular problem: editing a journal from a house with no spare room, and with three children. I was able to devote attention to the journal only during the hours when the children were at school. I would spread typescripts, proofs, typewriter and tools over the dining table, clearing everything away as tea-time approached. The journal production schedule was changed to avoid the busiest period coinciding with school holidays. The

William S. Heckscher
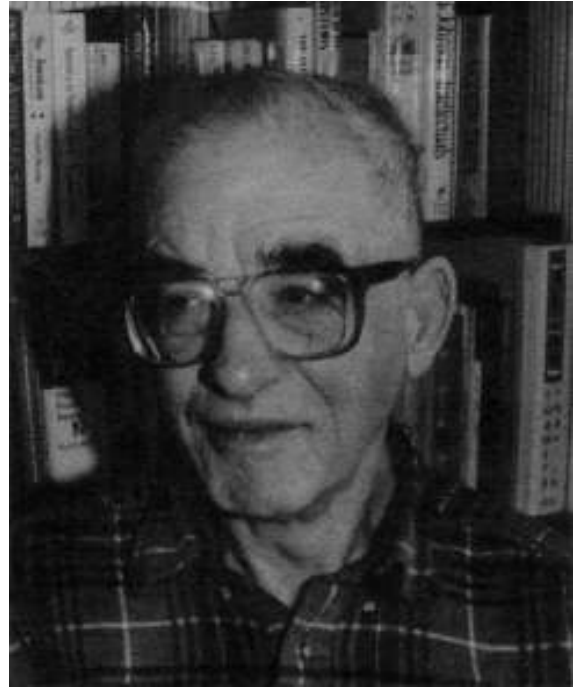
Hans H. Welisch

children tried to help, knowing they must not touch my papers or make noise during my phone calls, and doing their best to deal with these themselves when necessary. I came home once to find that my young daughter had taken a booking for an advertisement for a thesaurus, helpfully ascertaining and noting down for me, `It's a sort of book'.

Then, just as we finally went to press with the *Indexer* issue including the 1978 conference proceedings, Norman Knight, SI founder-President, died. So after all the trauma of getting my first issue into print, my next, Volume 11 no. 3, had to include an obituary and tributes for Knight. And we had to redesign the journal cover to take in the affiliation of the Canadian Society.

In 1979 SI joined the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, a body composed of the publishing arms of learned societies and professional institutions. We were members of group A, the smallest category: those societies spending less than £10,000 a year on publications. SI was one of the few members that had no premises. Fellow institutional representatives asking where I was based, being told `at home', would look politely surprised.

Also in that year our London-based treasurer resigned and was succeeded by one in Cambridge, where our secretary lived. I asked for the new treasurer's telephone number, to be told, `The treasurer does not have a telephone, but the secretary has a bicycle'.

Peter Greig

Indexing *The Indexer*

Then on to No. 4 of my first *Indexer* volume — which had always included the volume index, prepared each year by a different member of SI. I was well aware that this commission might not be the honour it appeared: my predecessor as editor had once telephoned me and asked me to prepare the index to the current volume. I gasped, overhelmed, "I think you ought to ask someone else!". With a remarkable lack of tact, he told me, "I've already asked everyone else". I declined the commission. Now it was up to me to find a volume indexer, and get his or her work into print in the final issue of the volume.

It was over the indexing of each volume of *The Indexer* that I came thoroughly to understand and even empathise with publishers' impatience with indexers ...

So on to 1980, my second *Indexer* volume, when the printers of the *Indexer* suffered a union go-slow. Then in 1981 we were again faced with provision of a volume index.

John Gordon later wrote a splendid article on the variations of the *Indexer* indexes, including:[11]

> For just over two decades it was editorial policy to give each volume-indexer extensive freedom to display his/her personal virtuosity. Each compilation has its own special qualities, revealing fascinating variations of style, of technique, of decision-making; it has indeed been said with pride that these indexes are living proof that indexing is an art rather than a science. Truly ... they demonstrate how widely individual indexers may vary in the solution of particular problems, and how numerous such permitted variables are.

Before commissioning the index for volume 12, the editorial board sent a list of 40 questions about index style to eight prominent SI members, and collated the — far from uniform — replies to form a set of guidelines for *Indexer* indexes which we hoped would later enable a cumulative index to be compiled. Freda Wilkinson, who undertook to prepare the index to volume 12, was the society's very conscientious treasurer, and she made calculations as to the likely cost of providing a cumulative index, concluding that it would simply not be possible for the society to meet it. She agreed that she would keep a record of her hours compling the index for volume 12, and charge SI's recommended indexing rate for it; but after completing the work, said the hours were excessive and innumerable, and accepted (from herself as treasurer) only a small token payment.

The editorial board subsequently battled valiantly to adopt the principle that the society should not exploit the professional skills of its members by underpaying them for indexing commissions, and should pay the full hourly rate for these (although not doing so for any other type of work undertaken on behalf of the society) — but in fact never, in my time on Council at least, was it able to put its money where its mouth was and do so. Our indexers all received only token, inadequate payments.

By 1983 also the three affilliated societies as well as SI each had their own newsletter, carrying their own national indexing news. *The Indexer* concentrated less on the development of the societies, reporting these in a new, regular feature, "Shoebox, International" in which Judy Batchelor, *The Indexer*'s wittiest contributor, provided elegant, detailed, appreciative resumés of all four societies' newsletters.

The march of technology

Meanwhile, technology had developed with bewildering speed. Computers had made their first appearance in *The Indexer* in 1965, with a description of their use for the production of technical manuals at IBM.[12] In 1981 — the year I moved on to using an electric typewriter — *The Indexer* expatiated on the difference between microcomputers (described as 'complete computer systems') and microprocessors ('the actual CPU [central processing unit] chips'), describing also mainframe computers, minicomputers (`dedicated to a particular task') and word-processors.[13] Dr Hilary Calvert, an oncologist, computer enthusiast, and husband of a freelance indexer, Drusilla, devised a dedicated program to enable her to do her indexing on computer. This was the first indexing software; it was launched as MACREX at a demonstration at the Library Association in 1981,[14] with an advertisement in *The Indexer* the following year.

By 1983 both the journal and the society's newsletter seemed in danger of being overwhelmed by technical material and discussion among computer users, and a Technology working party was formed. It produced the *MicroIndexer*, intended to be a technical supplement to *The Indexer*, hiving off such material from the journal. Its first issue was in January 1983, a single A4 sheet, beginning: "This is the first in a series of occasional newsletters which will be devoted to the use of microcomputers

by indexers". It ran eventually to fifteen issues, finishing in 1992, totalling 152 pages. Its most prolific contributors were Drusilla and Hilary Calvert and Richard Raper.

There were some disadvantages for indexers in the advent of the computer. Authors thought they could check the indexes provided for them by using the search key. One author complained to the publishers about an index I had prepared to his biography of a playwright. He appears to have called up on his computer screen all occurrences of particular words, printed them out with the lists of page numbers on which they appeared *in his typescript*, and sent them to the publisher as 'references the indexer has missed', insisting they be inserted. They included long lists of titles about which nothing was individually stated; casual comparisons; references within the text of plays; an entry for 'Christ, Jesus' with references to pages where characters in the plays said, 'Oh, Christ'; and an obscene joke about the Queen, which he considered should be listed under Q for Queen Elizabeth II.

Another disadvantage of the advent of the computer for the indexer was social. Being asked by new acquaintances, "What do you do?" and replying, "I'm an indexer", invariably led to, "But haven't computers made indexing obsolete?" I got very tired of delivering the standard riposte — and indeed remain so, as I'm sure indexers all do.

Computers became prominent in my own life. My husband, a research chemist, became Head of the Computing department when the institution where he worked acquired first a mainframe, then a network; he wrote an article for *The Indexer* in 1979, "Computerized indexing need not be impossible".[15] On the domestic front, by the 1980s my sons grew up and moved out, and an erstwhile bedroom became my editorial office, boasting file-lined walls, computers and laser printer. My elder son, Ian, bought me a BBC computer for Christmas in 1984. What I most blessed on moving to use it was the silence as I keyed in. When, due to breakdown or power cuts, I had to revert to steam typing, the clatter seemed abominable. The next blessing was no longer having to reveal the shame of my horribly messy, heavily-corrected typscripts. Then the speed, and the ability to print out extra copies — no more shuffling sheets of grubby carbon paper. Formatting was fun, too, forming electronic layouts on screen, as I later learned to use and love desktop publishing.

Ian was reading maths at university; after graduating in 1985 he spent a year gaining a diploma in computer science, for which he had to do a practical project. Having grown up hearing his parents constantly disputing as to whether or not automatic indexing was possible (Father said yes, Mother no) he chose for his project to write an indexing program for the BBC Micro (MACREX wasn't available for a standard BBC micro) — it would be my next Christmas present. However, he decided that no existing computer language was sufficiently sophisticated for his plans, so he began by writing a new language (TILT —Threaded Interpretative Language for Text — and the program was to be LIST — Logical Indexing System in TILT). But, alas, the language he devised proved so complex that the wretched examiners gave him his diploma for that, so he never wrote the program!

He did, though, devise for me an alphabetical sorting program that I could use with only the word-processing facilities of HiView on my BBC Model B. I would type in entries as they would appear in print: main heading full out, automatically turned over at maximum line end; subheadings on lines beneath, indented. I would save the completed index with particular symbols at the top and bottom of the section to be sorted, load in the sort program, tell it the name of the file to work on, save the sorted version under a different name, and bless my son.

There was a drawback, however: shortage of memory allowed sorting only of a restricted length of index. Some indexes had to be divided into 2, or even 3 files, for separate sorting. In these cases, I had to sort each half or third again into alphabetical halves or thirds, so that the resultant A-H sections could then be combined and resorted together, and the second and third alphabetical sections likewise, before all were again combined in one complete alphabetical file. I might be dealing with 9 separate files all to be sorted and then combined.

Much later, when I had moved from using the BBC computer to a pc and WordPerfect, my husband wrote an indexing program for me to my own specifications as an indexer of soft texts. He intended to market it, as a program for 'soft indexers'; but always there were just a few bugs to clear first — then he adapted it for Windows — then a few more bugs — now, seventeen years after its genesis, I very much doubt that the market will ever see the program! But I remain extemely happy with it.

In 1986 we began what I regarded, until computer searching became possible, as the most valuable regular feature *The Indexer* has provided. Hans Wellisch had published two volumes of bibliography, *Indexing and abstracting: an international bibliography*,[16] reviewed in *The Indexer* as ''A comprehensive survey of literature on indexing and abstracting,'' and *Indexing and abstracting 1977–1981*.[17] From 1986 to 1989 this current-awareness bibliography was resumed in the form of

regular instalments he supplied as detachable supplements for *The Indexer*. In 1993 Jean Wheeler undertook the continuation of the bibliography, which concluded with her part 8 in 1997.

In 1988, on behalf of *The Indexer*, I became an investigative journalist. In *The Guardian*, that August, there appeared a letter (about the indexing of fiction) signed "E. St. J. Arthur, Ivy Cottage, Chathill, Northumberland". I recognized it as having appeared in *The Indexer* in 1962 — reprinted from *The Times*, and signed by Evelyn [Arthur St John] Waugh, who had since died (in 1966). Only one letter of comment appeared in *The Guardian*, pointing out that this letter was included in a published volume of Waugh's letters, and ending, "I think you've been had!" I traced, got into correspondence with, and named the hoaxer in the pages of *The Indexer*.[18]

I attended — and enjoyed — all the SI conferences held during my tenure as editor. The one I most remember was in 1989, on an island off the coast of Yugoslavia. I was walking on the mainland with Drusilla Calvert, discussing computer indexing programs, when she remarked, "I helped to build this road". Quite the most unlikely thing you would expect to hear from such a person on such an occasion ... she had in fact done this as an undergraduate with an International Brigade.

In 1990, the fact that ASI installed a society telephone with an answering machine was described as "a giant step in communications". In that year, I acquired a fax. By then *The Indexer*'s most enterprising contributors had begun to impress us with formatted printouts, and bewilder us by offering disks. I sent out a letter to contributors, beginning "We are going to try supplying copy for our journal to the printers


SI Conference at Chester, 1987

SI Council at SI Conference at Norwich, July 1994

The SI conference at Hvar, Yugoslavia, 1989

on disk, when available in this form", and giving instructions for cooperation with this. At first we passed the discs straight on to the printers, but later I came to appreciate the advantages of being able to add our own corrections; print out extra copies; count words (no more casting-off!), or format copy to appear as it would on the printed pages.

Publications

In 1988 SI invested £10,000 in devising and publishing an open-learning indexing course of five units, each comprising self-study text and self-administered test. It was designed to lead to a new qualification: that of Accredited Indexer. Its initial units concentrated on the structure and arrangement of indexes, rather than on analysing concepts and devising terms in which to express them in subheadings. I saw this course as suitable only for documentary indexing; for the indexing of dry texts, composed of discrete, separate items; it did not cover whole-book indexing, and gave no guidance for the indexing of soft texts, narratives with extended continuity. I believe that stories of human lives in narrative form bring problems for indexers that are quite distinct from the particular techniques of indexing technical works, with regard both to form and content. I wrote a short book, *Indexing biographies and other stories of human lives*,[19] to complement the SI open-learning course with advice about indexing soft, humanities texts. This was published as the first in SI's series of Occasional Papers on Indexing in 1992.

By 1992 all four societies of indexers had greatly expanded and increased their activities, including their output of newsletters. It was no longer possible even for such a skilled writer as Judy Batchelor to cover all their contents in single biannual instalments, and "Shoebox, International" was put to rest, replaced by reports supplied by members of each society, in a new feature called at first "Out of the Shoebox — into the Network", then just "Network of Indexers". The reporter for AusSI affairs was Ian Odgers.

Also in 1992, Hilary and Drusilla Calvert moved away from London, and let a room of their London flat to serve as SI's first administrative office.

Indexer contents

We still lacked a cumulative index to *The Indexer*, and I greatly enjoyed compiling a classified list of all our major topics from 1958 to 1993. This divided the 564 articles that had by then appeared in *The Indexer* into 12 sections, showing how much we had published on particular topics through the 36 years. The largest section was the one devoted to the practice of indexing, which was itself subdivided into sections, the major ones being indexer/author/publisher relations and principles and techniques. The other subsections there were: aboutness, alphabetization, bias, evaluation, humor, legal aspects, training, and users. The second largest group of contributions was that on subject specialities, 15 of them listed, from archeology to science and technology. Third came types of indexes, from bibliographic indexing to the indexing of poetry, hymns and psalms, with the indexing of newspapers, periodicals, and their cumulations being most numerous. Then, in decreasing order of numbers of articles — Biographies and literary figures; countries and languages; information technology application; indexing systems, standards and methods; Archives and databases; bibliographies and reference works; the history of indexing; services; and design and layout.

The gender balance of contributors had changed through those years. Elizabeth Wallis later wrote in *The Indexer*, reminiscing about the early years of SI, "I remember the overwhelming maleness of the Society's officers".[20] Similarly, all the journal editors up to 1978, when I became editor, had been men; since then, all have been women. Catherine Sassen has examined articles, editorials, letters to the editor and reviews from every issue of *The Indexer* published from 1958-2007.[21] She found that women constituted only 11 percent of all authors in the journal's first ten years, and 21 percent in the next ten. The number of women contributors then grew considerably in the years of my editorship; from 1978 to 1987 they constituted 41 percent of authors, increasing to 49 percent from 1988 to 1997.
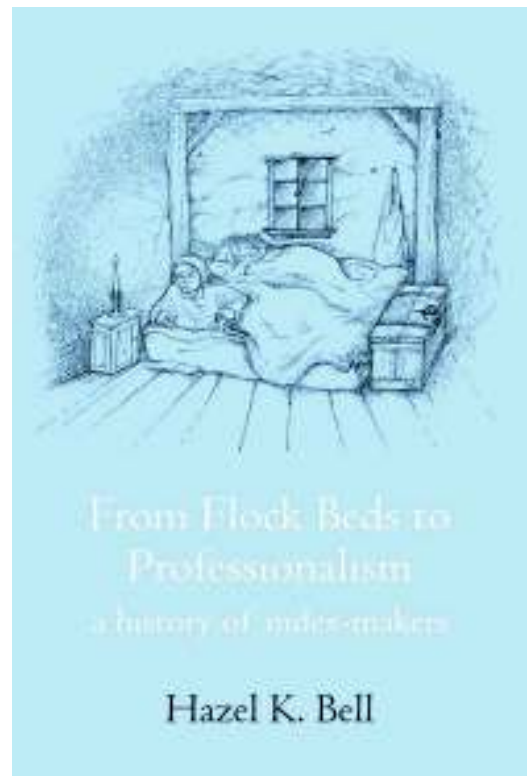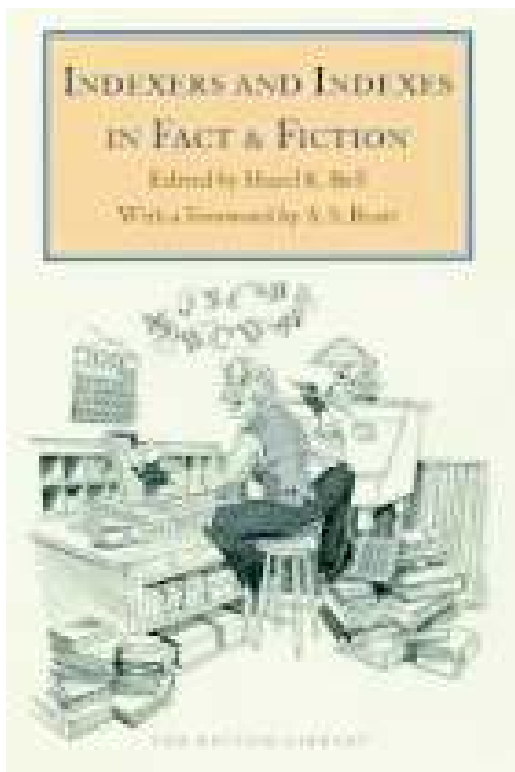
In 1995 it was time for me to hand on *The Indexer* editorship, after 18 years in the chair, and bewildered by the seeming technological takeover. I found another disadvantage of the single-person office to be that one small head carries so much journal lore; the only one who knows details of the production routine, process, development, the current state. Recalling the five hand-written pages I had been given along with the editorial mantle, I detailed the documentation I thought necessary to represent the production of the journal, set it all down, and passed on many papers and disk files to my successor. Recalling too the solitary state in which I had taken over the journal, I was deeply impressed that the next editor lived in the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England, with as co-editor a colleague in California, the collaboration made possible by email (which I only took to myself in 1996).

I was left with familiarity with the contents of *The Indexer* through 18 years, especially the lighter, quirky items that so many people had sent in, that they had discovered in old volumes or noted in the press. I culled a selection of these, edited and annotated them, obtained copyright permissions, and compiled the entertaining anthology, *Indexers and Indexes in Fact and Fiction*, published in 2001 by the British Library.[22] I had also made many contributions to the journal myself, and now collated the instalments of the history of societies of indexers that I had written for it, and some of the features on individual indexers I had interviewed, added to them, and produced the only history of indexers in the market: *From Flock Beds to Professionalism*.[23] Both these volumes stem directly from my editing of *The Indexer*.

The publishers who produced *Flock Beds* asked me for a colour picture of an indexer at work for promotion. As the book is a history of indexers, I didn't want a picture of one working on a computer — but I could not find any image of an indexer working with cards. I searched through albums, files, journals, google images, asked colleagues — I really think no such picture existed. Finally I decided I would have to fake it. We brought my long-unused box-tray and a supply of index cards and tabs down from the loft, simulated a batch of galley proofs by cutting an A4 set in half vertically and taping the sections together into streamers, and my son photographed me at the dining table as in former days, apparently working on them.

So I end this talk as I began it, describing an indexer at work in the oldfashioned way, with the traditional cards and shoebox, as I practised it in the 1960s, and restaged in the year 2008.

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