Julie Kawabata: Portrait of an Indexer
by Kristin Manke

Why did you decide to be an indexers? It certainly wasn’t a bolt of lightning kind of thing. I had written a couple of very small indexes for friends, just to try my hand at it, and I had a mild interest in knowing more about indexing. So I joined ASI, which was a much smaller, quieter organization then. That was back in about 1985.

I had a busy library job at the time. I did notice that, as a member of ASI, I could list myself in what was then called the “Register of Indexers.” Experience as an indexer was not required for a listing. As a special librarian, I had worked with many arcane subjects in the physical sciences and electronics over the years. So, I presumptuously sent in a Register blurb that said I would index books in engineering and electronics. I then forgot all about it. Until one day in September of 1986 when I got a call out of the blue from a major New York publisher. The editor had seen my listing in the Register and had a 770-page book on radio-wave propagation that needed an index. In retrospect I think she must have been very anxious to find an indexer, because she didn’t ask me any hard questions like “Have you ever done this before?” Lucky for me. Instead, I was able to rattle off a few radio-related terms that sounded like I knew what I was talking about, we agreed on a fee, and the next day all 770 pages and a modest indexing style guide were in a FedEx package on my doorstep.

I was thrilled. I borrowed a copy of Knight’s Indexing, The Art Of, bought a bunch of 3x5 cards, and went to work. A month later I sent in the finished index. The editor said, “It looks good, would you like to do another one?”

And that’s how it all started.

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Statistical Snapshot of Our Membership
by Kari Kells

These statistics were gathered from responses to questions asked in our last newsletter. There were 14 respondents to the 200 newsletters and questionnaires mailed! Thanks again for helping us keep current statistics on our members so that we can plan meetings targeted to our membership.

Respondents were asked to rank the following categories according to the usefulness of bringing in new clients, and to not rank methods that they don't use. They are listed here in order of their ranking. The first three had very similar rankings, and the rest were trailed by quite a bit.
1. referrals from other indexers
2. referrals from clients
3. cold calls and cold query letters
4. previous employers
5. directory listing in ASI's Indexer Services
6. directory listing in Yellow Pages
7. website
8. networking at non-ASI meetings
9. advertising (no one ranked this category)

Do you use a contract?
9 answered sometimes
4 answered no
2 answered that a confirmation letter serves as their contract
1 answered always

If yes, who supplies it?
7 answered that their client(s)
6 answered that they do

If you provide a contract, did you seek guidance on the contents of the contract?
3 consulted with legal professionals
2 based it on the ASI Recommended Indexing Agreement
2 consulted contracts of other freelance professionals
1 wrote in that they consulted INDEX-L posts
1 wrote in that they consulted contracts from a small press

Do you invoice under:
7 use their Social Security Number
3 use an Employer Identification Number
2 use a Business Identification Number
1 wrote in that they were in-house
1 wrote in that they invoice under their business name only (Note: they didn't indicate how their clients file tax information without using one of the numbering systems recognized by the IRS).

What Would You Recommend?
Provide Your Input for the Next Issue of Statistical Snapshot

Please answer the following questions so that we can maintain and report accurate statistics of our membership. Send your answers via mail or e-mail to Kari Kells. If you have ideas for questions you'd like us to ask our members, let Kari know.

Question #1: If you were recommending five resources to new or potential indexers, what would they be? These can be books, web sites, periodicals, or any other resource you'd recommend.

Question #2: What are the most valuable reference sources that you use during indexing? Please list dictionaries (especially subject-specific), encyclopedias, style manuals or any other sources you use regularly to support your business. These can be print or online.
Recent Indexes by PNW/ASI Members
compiled by Helen Schinske

Nancy Donnelly
- Going Places: Family Getaways in the Pacific Northwest, ed. Ann Bergman, Northwest Parent Publishing (current project). It's going to be quite a useful book for people travelling with children, and tells important things like which small towns have entertaining diversions, when the festivals are, what hotels have bike rentals or water slides, thousands of details actually. As you can see, I'm enjoying doing the index.

Judi Gibbs
Has recently taken a job at Microsoft, where she is working on an Encarta product

Kari Kells
- Programming Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft Press
- Fire and Emergency Services Instructor, Fire Protection Publications

Randi Ockey
- Baseball for Everybody, by Tom Glavine
- Using GPS: Finding Your Way with the Global Positioning System, by Bruce Grubbs
- The 12th Commandment of Wildly Successful Women, by Pamela Gilberd
- Food Festivals of Texas, by Bob Carter
- Hiking Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks, by Erik Molvar

Breffni Whelan
- Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India, ed. S.M. Michael
- The Joy of Ballooning, by George Dennison. About the shortest and quickest index I've ever done. Lots of pictures of unusual hot-air balloons

Kristin Manke
- Pollution Prevention Opportunity Assessments for the Research and Development Laboratory, Battelle Press. Quick, fun, and I learned a lot!

Martha Osgood
- The End of Time, by Joseph Pieper, Ignatius Press (reprinted from the 1950 edition, with a new index)
- A Spirituality of Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth, by Roger Gottlieb, Crossroad Publishing Company
- Making the Gospel Plain: The Writings of Reverdy C. Ransom, by Anthony Pinn, Trinity Press International
- Elderberry Wine, by Peter Wotton, Alpine Books
- Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven: The Forgotten Christianity of Jesus, the Jew, by Sir Anthony Buzzard, Ph.D., self-published
- Intercultural Communication: A Reader, ed. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, Wadsworth Press/Thomson (a college textbook)
- Two genealogy local indexes

Helen Passey
- Poetry Writing: Theme and Variations, NTC/Contemporary
- Everyday Creative Writing: Panning for Gold in the Kitchen Sink, NTC/Contemporary

Sherry L. Smith
- Labyrinth of Capital Gains Tax Policy, by Leonard E. Burman
- Urban Problems and Community Development, ed. Ronald F. Ferguson and William T. Dickens
- Costume and Identity in Highland Ecuador, ed. Ann Pollard Rowe
- Measuring and Monitoring Plant Populations, by Caryl L. Elzinga, Daniel W. Salazar, and John W. Willoughby
- Children of the Yellow Kid: The Evolution of the American Comic Strip, by Robert C. Harvey

If you would like to add your published indexes to this list, contact Helen Schinske at the chapter meeting or with e-mail, HsSchinske@aol.com.
Meet Your New Officers: 1999-2000
by Sherry Smith

Depending on how one interprets the calendar, the new officers for the Pacific Northwest Chapter of ASI will be responsible for the last meetings of the century and the first meeting of the next millennium. They also share one major professional characteristic: each has been indexing for 3 years or less.

Randi Ockey (pronounced oakee), Vice-Chair/Program Coordinator, was raised in the Midwest and spent his pre-indexer life in library administration. He lives on Camano Island in Washington. Randi is making the transition to indexing by working part time as a Human Resource manager for 20 hours per week (the steady paycheck) and wrestling with page proofs for another 30 hours per week. The best parts of the new profession for Randi are setting his own schedule, not having to commute, and working with great editors.

Martha Osgood, Secretary-Treasurer, has a degree in philosophy. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, close to a latte shop where she periodically works on page proofs. She spent part of her life in California and in Germany. Martha likes to concentrate for hours without interruption and is able to do that in her new career. Her degree in philosophy is serving her well as all of those marvelous tomes

Our goals include publicizing professional indexing and indexers to regional publishers.

in the field come across the desk. She gets to read them for fun and money. Martha is also a cat lover, a UU, and a quilter. <Editor's Note: if you want to know what UU means, you'll have to ask Martha @.>

Sherry Smith, Chair, is a native Oregonian who spent her pre-indexing career in small business management with a little puzzle writing on the side. She lives in Bend, Oregon, and spends her nonindexing time in the woods with a camera. The best parts of indexing for Sherry are the intellectual challenge, the quiet at home, and all the new and varied books.

Each of the officers has enjoyed and benefited from chapter membership. Those benefits have included new friends, educational programs, colleagues to help with indexing problems, and moral support while building a new business. They have also followed the advice of the experienced indexers in the field — get involved to help your business and your skills grow. Randi has served on the newsletter committee. Martha has served on the directory committee and will be on the new marketing committee. Sherry has served on the newsletter, directory, and volunteer recognition committees.

The officer team wants to build on the tremendous foundation built by previous officers and founding members. Their goals for the next year include:

- providing programs with new activities that have wide membership appeal
- publicizing professional indexing and indexers to regional publishers
- facilitating contact and connections between chapter members
- strengthening the informal regional meeting structure
- establishing a buddy system for new people at chapter meetings
- increasing the use of INDEX-NW and the web site to communicate with members
- having a formal workshop in eastern Washington
- continued recognition of volunteers in the chapter
- continued support and energy for all the current activities (see "Volunteer Corner")

The officer team would like to thank the 1998-1999 officers for including them in recent planning activities. Their enthusiasm, energy, and professionalism have helped to build a tremendous chapter. Thank you Kari Kells, Jan Wright, and Louise Martin.
Volunteer Corner
by Sherry Smith

The Pacific Northwest Chapter has several active and effective committees. This column tells you about the volunteers on each one and details their special activities.

The newsletter committee members are Kristin Manke (coordinator), Cheryl Landes, Shirley Hansen, Randl Ockey, Fran Smith, Helen Schinske, Lynn Stewart, Ed Wood, Betty Frizzell, Heather Marsch, and Sherry Smith. As a group, they decide on topics for the newsletter and edit each other’s work. Some people write articles, and some people edit and proofread only. Other members fold, stamp, and mail the final product. More volunteers are needed for folding and stamping (1-3 hours/issue) and for writing articles. Contact Kristin if you are interested.

The directory committee just completed their monumental task of compiling, producing, and distributing the Publisher's Guide to Indexers in the Pacific Northwest. Those members are Kari Kells (coordinator), Judy Jackson, Kristin Manke, Martha Osgood, and Mary Silva Whittaker. New members to the committee are Helen Passey and Breffni Whelan. The next step for this group is to contact publishers during the year to find out if the directory was useful and used. They will also contact PNW members to find out if the directory was effective in producing more work. And last but not least, there will be a comparison of the online and published directory use. Contact Kari if you want to participate.

The marketing committee is a new one for the chapter. Members are Cheryl Landes (coordinator), Nancy Donnelly, Heather Marsch, Robin Hlp, and Martha Osgood. The purpose of this committee is to tell the Pacific Northwest why it needs professional indexers. The committee will use INDEX-NW and the newsletter to keep the chapter informed about its plans. There are positive rumors about great ideas.

The program committee is also new to the chapter. In the past, the vice-chair alone has been responsible for program planning. Committee members are Randl Ockey (coordinator), Louise Martin, Elspeth Pope, Helen Passey, and Heather Marsch. Currently they are planning the October chapter meeting and a formal regional meeting in eastern Washington (see note below).

One other committee, Web Site, needs more volunteers. Kari Kells has been the webmaster. Robin Hlp, Zoe Holbrooks, and Kristin Manke are new members. The PNW Chapter has a significant and detailed web site developed and maintained by Kari. During the next year, even more information about chapter events, policies, committee procedures, and volunteer contributions will be placed at the web site. If you want to participate, please contact Kari.

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Chapter Meeting: Introduction to Indexing and Editing Indexes Workshop
Richland, Washington, July 24, 1999

In this workshop — led by Kari Kells — we’ll discuss indexing basics (choosing entries, phrasing, alphabetization, structure) and editing indexes (consistency, structure, usability). Participants will be sent a short text to index before the workshop, a copy of which Kari will evaluate before the workshop so you will receive personalized feedback on your own work. During our time together, we will compare your indexes to the published index and also to those created by other participants.

This workshop is geared towards beginning and potential indexers who already have some understanding of the skills necessary for indexing, but who want comments on their own work, group discussions about indexing issues, and real-life examples of how much better their own work is when compared to some published indexes. Experienced indexers are strongly encouraged to attend for the usual networking and for enriching the professional points of view on topics discussed at the meeting. Keep an eye on Index-NW for more info.
Marketing 101: Contacting Publishers
by Randi Ockey

The moment of truth (or perhaps more accurately, panic!) has arrived. You’ve done a good job of planning your marketing campaign. You’ve sent out convincing and attractive materials to interested editors. Contacting publishers can’t be put off any longer. However, your stomach is doing somersaults; there’s enough perspiration on your hands to short-circuit your keyboard and your chest is so tight you think you may be having a mild heart attack. You’ve picked up the phone eleven times already and replaced it in its cradle an equal number of times. The closest you’ve come to speaking with an editor is the next to last digit in his/her phone number. You actually find yourself wishing that the school would call to tell you that “your child is leaving a trail of vomit throughout the third-grade wing and would you please come pick her up IMMEDIATELY!”

Sound familiar? Let’s start over again, and see if we can change this scenario.

Mental Preparation
So, what is the worst thing that can happen in a phone call? Here’s a list: 1) you may say something silly or stupid and make a fool of yourself, 2) you may catch an editor on a bad day and be treated rudely, or 3) you may find out that this publisher doesn’t need your services. Let’s take a brief look at each of these possibilities.

#1 So you’ve made a fool of yourself. Are you going to have to face this person in the grocery checkout line, at the next parent-teacher conference, or at this summer’s family reunion? The chance of ever having to face this person at all is about zero, and by the end of the day, neither of you is likely to remember the other’s name. The anonymity of the phone is an incredible insulator that allows you to bandage your wounded pride and move forward.

#2 “Wow, did he ever get up on the wrong side of the bed,” you find yourself saying as you set the phone back down. So you landed right in the middle of somebody’s day from the dark side. That’s too bad. But what are the odds, realistically, of being treated rudely? I can only cite my own experience. I estimate I’ve cold-called 100-150 publishers in the last 18 months, and I can only recall being treated rudely twice.

#3 Isn’t that what you called to find out? Mission accomplished.

Making the Call
You’ve done your homework to identify prospective contacts. With phone number in hand, you’re ready to make the call. But first, you need to have a dialogue ready.

The person you want to speak with is whoever makes decisions about indexing, so your first task is to get the receptionist to transfer you to the right person. You need a dialogue that feels comfortable to you, but it may be as simple as, “Hello, I’m a freelance indexer and I’m calling to find out if XYZ Publishing uses freelance indexers. Could you please transfer me to someone who could answer that question?” The receptionist transfers you, and you repeat the question. Why? Because there’s only about a 50% probability you got transferred to the right person.

When you do finally reach that person, you need to get right to the point. After determining that they do use freelancers, your next question could be, “What would I need to do to become one of your freelance indexers?” At this moment, you have to be an expert listener. Listen to questions about your qualifications, and be ready with solid answers. Listen carefully to instructions about materials they would like to receive from you and be ready to offer suggestions. Listen for any clues about their needs, any openings for you to talk about a common interest, any way for you to help this person feel comfortable with you, or any hint that you’re wasting your time and theirs by pursuing this. Keep the conversation brief, and at the end, be sure to thank the person for visiting with you.

Call, Send, Call
It’s a tried and true formula, and you’ve just done the hardest part of it. The next step is the easiest. Send the materials with a brief cover letter. Make a note on your calendar about one week out and prepare for the follow-up call. Again, you need to have a dialogue in mind. Remember, you’re calling back to 1) make sure they got your materials, 2) answer any questions they may have about your qualifications, and 3) find out how interested they are in you. You ask questions to find out about #1 and #2, you become the expert listener again to get the answer to #3. If you sense some interest, test the waters a bit with something like, “Would it be all right if I check back with you periodically?” or some similar question. At this point, there’s no magic formula; you just have to listen really well, follow your gut instincts, and do everything possible to begin to establish a relationship with the person on the other end of the phone.

Next issue: Cultivating relationships
Q: Should there be limits on the length and thoroughness of an online index?

None of my clients have asked me to limit the number of entries in their online indexes. Because users of online indexes don’t have the flexibility of flipping pages as they can in a book, it’s much easier to get lost. Anything the indexer can do to help users go directly to the information they need greatly improves an online index. Often this means adding extra detail, or building in more redundancy than you would find in a print index. This redundancy improves an online index, and it will create a longer one.

Q: How is page length determined for print indexes?

The publisher determines page length based on the content of the book and the amount of space available. Generally, they’ll allocate a certain percentage, but sometimes they’ll limit indexes to a certain number of pages or number of lines. Nancy Mulvany’s book, Indexing Books, provides these basic guidelines for various types of books (page 66):

- Mass market trade books (not heavily detailed): 2-5% or 3-5 entries per page
- General reference books (cookbooks, medical texts, scholarly texts, and style guides): 7-8% or 6-8 entries per page
- Technical documentation I (general end-user manuals, introductory manuals, policy and procedure manuals, and training manuals): 10% or 8-10 entries per page
- Technical documentation II (codes and regulations, service and repair manuals, specialized audience material, systems manuals, and theory of operations): 15%+ or 10+ entries per page

Q: How do you handle indexing text you don’t understand?

I go directly to the author if I have access (with permission from the editor, of course!). If this isn’t possible, then I contact the editor with my questions. If the editor doesn’t know the answers, then he or she will either contact the author or allow me to do this directly.

To submit questions to this column, e-mail questions to clandes407@aol.com or mail them to Tubby Cat Communications, 4742-42nd Avenue SW #512, Seattle, WA 98116-4571.

What did you do to train as an indexer?
I never did train as an indexer, although I do have an MLS degree and many years of experience massaging and categorizing information. But mostly I’m convinced that indexers, librarians, and other kindred spirits are possessed of a certain peculiarity of mind that just naturally seeks out the patterns and the order in any seemingly random pile of information.

What type of materials do you index?
I index mostly technical and business books, some trade books; much of my work is computer books. Some of my favorite book projects are listed on my Web site at www.teleport.com/~jkawa. I have also done some indexing work for CD-ROM products, and I’m starting to do some software help file indexing.

I’m hoping to do more electronic and Web-based projects in the future. I think there are many opportunities for indexers beyond the traditional back-of-the-book project, although I will concede that the paths to finding such opportunities are not particularly clear at this point.

What advice would you give to those who want to be freelance indexers?
Know thyself. The idea of staying home and wearing any old thing and keeping the cat company while you work has great appeal. But indexing is real work. Excruciatingly detailed, deadline-driven, mostly solitary work that does not suit everyone. And it takes a lot of it to make a good living. If you have a day job, hang onto it until you have a feel for whether indexing and working alone are things you really want to do.
Judging Indexes for Wilson Award Explained at Spring Chapter Meeting

by Cheryl Landes

Colleen Dunham, an indexer for Microsoft’s *Encarta Encyclopedia*, is a judge for the ASI/H.W. Wilson Award. For the past 2 years, she has been reading and evaluating indexes submitted for this prestigious professional award in our industry. At the PNW ASI spring meeting in Olympia, Colleen told chapter members about the judging process.

Any indexer and any publisher may submit books for judging. Colleen said that few do, however. In 1998, the committee received eleven books for review and this year, in 1999, twelve books are being evaluated.

"People who judge their own indexes are too critical," Colleen said. She thinks that is why so many indexers refrain from entering their books in the competition. "Excellence doesn’t mean perfect," she said. "The idea is to get a lot of participation and contenders."

Submissions are sent to ASI’s administrative office in Phoenix, where all identifying marks are removed. The books are then sent to a central location, usually a hotel, where the committee meets and spends a day evaluating the indexes. Sometimes, despite all the care taken to keep books from being identified, a judge will recognize a book. When this happens, the judge will disqualify himself or herself.

Indexes are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Accuracy
- Style
- Level of analysis
- Format
- Thoroughness of coverage
- Usability
- Elegance

The award is presented each year at the annual ASI conference. This year the conference will be held June 9-13 at the Union Station Crowne Plaza in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The H.W. Wilson Award, modeled after the prestigious Wheatley Medal, was established in 1978 and first awarded in 1979. Past winners, judging criteria, and submission instructions are listed on ASI’s Web site at http://www.asiindexing.org/awards.htm.

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**Pacific Northwest Chapter, ASI**

http://www.mindspring.com/~indexwest/ASI/

Chair: Sherry Smith
indexer@ibm.net or 541-382-6414

Vice-Chair / Program Coordinator: Randl Ockey
writelin@whidbey.net or 360-387-4559

Secretary / Treasurer: Martha Osgood
index@teleport.com or 541-484-1180

Archivist: Elspeth Pope
ludgate@wl.com or 360-427-0760

Newsletter Coordinator: Kristin Manke
feldman@3-cities.com or 509-372-6011

Directory Committee: Kari Kells
indexwest@mindspring.com or 206-567-5696

Marketing Coordinator: Cheryl Landes
clandes407@aol.com or 206-937-2488

Web Site Committee: Kari Kells
indexwest@mindspring.com or 206-567-5696

Newsletter Volunteers
Cheryl Landes, Shirley Hansen, Kristin Manke,
Randl Ockey, Fran Smith, Helen Schinske,
Lynn Stewart, Ed Wood, Betty Frizzell, Brad Frizzell,
Heather Marsch, and Sherry Smith