



PNW Chapter News

Louise Martin: Portrait of an Indexer

by Shirley Hansen



Louise Martin, her cat Hannah, and a year's worth of page proofs

Like so many other chapter memers that I have met, Louise Marin brings to the field of indexing a diverse background, a love of cats, and a strong desire to live in the Pacific Northwest. As a charter member, Louise has been a key player in the development of the Pacific Northwest chapter serving as secretary-treasurer for 2 years.

Before Indexing

Life before indexing for Louise included extensive research during her college, graduate school, and post-doctoral studies in the areas of learning and memory, from multiple perspectives — neurophysiology, then animal learning and memory, and finally developmental psychobiology. After leaving academia, Louise worked as an applied psychologist in the marketing research field.

Based in Philadelphia, she traveled extensively, consulting mainly with pharmaceutical companies and large consumer products companies. But the desire to live in the Pacific Northwest drew her to the Portland area where she became involved in developing training programs for new researchers, followed by organizational development consulting.

As often happens, it was time for a career move. As a researcher, Louise was constantly processing new information. She was used to doing lots of reading and data analysis, basically creating her own organizational schemes to retrieve information as needed.

Training

The first thing Louise did was to join ASI and purchase just about everything on starting and running an indexing business, along with Nancy Mulvany's book. Then she conducted

some information interviews with local indexers. It was obvious to Louise that indexing was the right choice for her, so she tackled the USDA Basic Indexing course, finishing within a few months. Next she completed a practice index of a relatively small book that Julie Kawabata had already indexed. Julie had provided Louise a copy of her index, so she could do some comparative studies — unwittingly Julie became her mentor. Louise continued to “practice” by completing two pro bono projects for local organizations. She also “coerced” Julie into reviewing a final draft of the first indexes. Julie's feedback was quite valuable and was the boost needed to give Louise the confidence to start a marketing campaign.

Later, Louise focused on medical indexing, which was another natural, due to her heavy research in the health sciences. She spent many hours studying medical indexing, by comparing and studying medical indexes in a nearby library, reading an ASI publication on the topic, and attending several roundtable discussions/workshops on it at ASI meetings. Louise hired an experienced medical indexer to review her first index — a small investment for terrific feedback.

Favorite Indexing Project

Louise's most unusual and “fun-to-do” index was the Community Health Aide Manual — a resource for health aides who work on reservations in Alaska. The target audience was not a highly educated one, but they needed a simple, easy-to-

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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. These responses were gathered from 2 respondents to the 200 newsletters and questionnaires mailed and to the posting on Index-NW! Thanks again to you two for sharing this information.

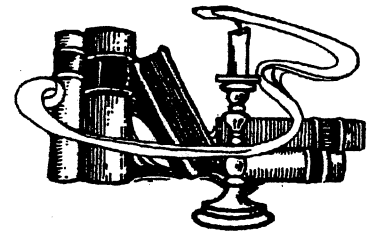
To help new indexers build their business library and to help experienced indexers share information about useful resources, we asked "if you were recommending five resources to new or potential indexers, what would they be?" The answers were

- ♦ Index-L and Onelist discussion groups (2 votes)
- ♦ Index-L and Onelist archives (2 votes)
- ♦ Ask an indexer segment of PNW meetings (2 votes)
- ♦ ASI Web site
- ♦ Actual, live in-person class
- ♦ Find an experienced indexer willing to have lunch with you sometimes and answer some of your questions as your first projects start to trickle in
- ♦ Nancy Mulvany's *Indexing Books*

We also wanted to help new indexers establish their reference collection, so we asked "what are the most valuable reference sources that you use during indexing?" One of the respondents listed the following:

- ♦ Index-L and Onelist archives
- ♦ Web sites related to the topic-at-hand
- ♦ Biographical encyclopedia.

For the next issue, Kari will be collecting statistics on indexers' personalities. Keep an eye on Index-NW.



STC Meetings: Past and Future

by Cheryl Landes



The Puget Sound chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) has been keeping busy with a variety of events of interest to both technical writers and indexers.

Eric Verzuh, owner of Versatile Company and author of *Fast Forward MBA in Project Management*, presented methods for managing projects successfully at the chapter's monthly meeting in Bellevue on September 28.

On October 14-16, the chapter celebrated its 40th anniversary by sponsoring the annual Region 7 conference in Bellevue. "Still Writing After All These Years" offered a variety of educational sessions for communicators. One talk that several of the indexers enjoyed was developing online indexing standards by Jean Thomas and Terri Sissman. They shared their efforts to develop and implement a large online help index. Their talk was quite interesting, with PNW/ASI indexers nodding knowingly to each other across the aisles during the talk. Other topics included

advantages and disadvantages of icons, information architecture, and Web design.

Upcoming STC meetings include

- ♦ "What Makes a Good Job Candidate?" (Nov 16): Donna Sakson, owner of the Seattle-based contract placement agency Sakson & Taylor, will lead a panel discussion on how to interview and place candidates in technical communication.
- ♦ "Visual Communication Primer" (Feb 15): University of Washington Technical Communications professor Tom Williams will talk about how to use visual elements in technical documents.

No chapter meetings are scheduled for December and January.

The monthly chapter meetings are held at the Best Western Bellevue Inn at the intersection of 112th Avenue SE and Main Street in Bellevue. Admission is \$7 for STC members and \$10 for non-members. Reservations must be guaranteed with a check or major credit card, and can be made by calling 206-632-8632. Upcoming meeting information can also be viewed at the chapter's Web site at <http://www.stc-psc.org/events.html>.

Ask an Indexer

compiled by Cheryl Landes

Q: An index of an online document generally uses index codes in-line with the referenced text. So there is no need to wait for final "page proofs" just to ensure the page references are correct. Let's assume the content author can avoid losing or misplacing embedded index codes while editing, and there is a version control system so the content and index authors don't interfere with each other's edits. When in the document development process should indexing begin? (Robin Hilp)

A: I prefer waiting until the chapters are frozen, which means that they are at the stage when the content writers and editors can't make any more changes. When documents are indexed earlier, more work has to be done on the index. On one embedded indexing project I recently completed, we started indexing when documents were 75% written and edited. The process worked well most of the time, but there were a few problems. The percentages were subjective and could change quickly. One day, the status of a document would be 75%, but the next day, it could drop to less than 75%. So if the indexer started working on the document when it was at 75%, her work might have to be redone, because the document could be undergoing major revisions. We were constantly checking our indexes to make sure that none of the revisions affected our entries. In three cases, we had to re-index documents that had been rewritten, because our entries were no longer valid.

Even with a version control system in place, there's no guarantee that the content writers and editors won't lose or misplace embedded entries. During this same project, we held three workshops for writers and editors, which explained in detail how to handle the indexing tags. We also provided detailed handouts that explained the process. When we started checking the tags before compiling the final index

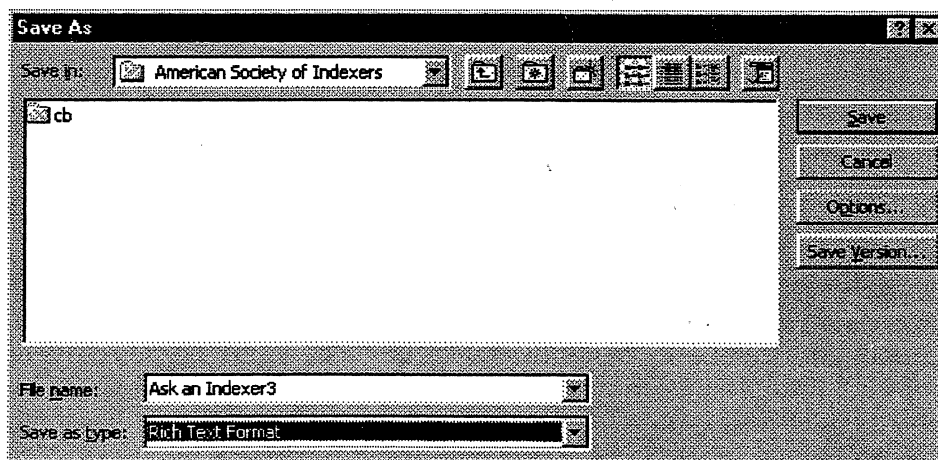
for one document, we discovered that many of the tags in one section had been misplaced or deleted. It took 8 hours to fix the tags in this section, which was one of the largest in the document.

Q: How do you save a file in RTF format (asked during the July 25 chapter meeting)?

This answer uses Microsoft® Word, but the process is similar in most word processing programs.

To save a file in RTF format:

1. From the File menu, choose Save As.
2. Type the name of the file in the File name field.
3. In the Files of Type field, click on the down arrow to the right of this field and select Rich Text Format. (You might have to scroll down in the list to find this option.) After you select Rich Text Format, the name of this format will appear in this field.
4. Click the Save button.



*To submit questions to this column,
e-mail questions to clandes407@aol.com
or mail them to Tabby Cat Communications,
One New York Plaza, PMB 160,
New York, NY 10004-1901*

How do you prefer your newsletter?

The question has been brought up about publishing the newsletter as part of the chapter Web site? What do you think? Do you like it in print? Would it be better as a newsletter? Express your thoughts on Index-NW or send e-mail to Sherry Smith at indexer@ibm.net.

Autumn Chapter Meeting

by Shirley Hansen and Mary Ratcliffe

It was a beautiful fall day, a little overcast but nice traveling weather for those who ventured from far and near to gather at Sylvia's Italian Restaurant in Portland for the 1999 PNW/ASI Fall Meeting. Introductions revealed that 25 well-seasoned, established, beginning, and "wannabe" indexers were in attendance; from 28 years to 2 weeks experience!!

Drew Proctor won the prize for the most miles traveled, logging 214 miles just getting here.

After introductions, President Sherry Smith recognized Robin Hiip and Deone Terrio for their efforts in coordinating the facility, food, and related logistics. As the day unfolded, it was indeed apparent that they had done an excellent job.

Announcements included:

- ♦ Formation of the Indexing Special Interest Group with the Society for Technical Communication
- ♦ Lending library is available to members and contains back issues of *The Indexer*, monographs and other materials — contact Elspeth Pope
- ♦ 1999 National Book Publishing Conference and Book Industry Trade Show, sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Book Publishers Association in Portland November 6-9; chapter staffed a table to network with publishers.

Sherry also reminded everyone that there were several committees that keep the chapter humming, and more volunteers are needed on all the committees (see Volunteer Corner article, page 6).

Following the short business meeting, publishers Julie Miller and Marianne Keddington-Lang, and indexers Julie Kawabata and Charles Anderson talked about publisher-indexer relations.

Publishers' Perspectives

Julie Miller of Microsoft Press indicated that the indexing done by her organization was driven by the software, so that it was very time sensitive and required a lot of flexibility by the indexer. However, she is aware of the important role that the indexer plays in the formation of a strong publication, so she tries to advocate for the indexer whenever possible.

Marianne Keddington-Lang of the Oregon Historical So-

ciety indicated that her work environment is more academic and not quite so consumer driven. She too recognized the importance of indexing and how it adds to the quality of the publication. She encouraged the audience to reach out to academic presses and historical associations with education about indexing and its importance.

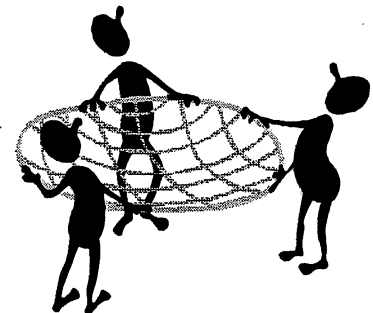
Indexers' Perspectives

Julie Kawabata is an indexer with 14 years experience. She urged chapter members to be sure that publishers and authors that have not worked with indexers before are educated about the purpose of an index and the important role it plays in making the book a useful tool. She shared several stories of where she has worked closely with those who were not familiar with indexers to educate them on the role of the index and the value of having a "strong, usable" index. Her lessons included 1) expect to explain the basics of indexing, 2) be proactive and reassuring, 3) be patient and flexible, 4) ask to proof the index after it is laid out, and 5) for new indexers, have a mentor to call.

Charles Anderson, a retired librarian with 28 years indexing experience, shared his experiences in working with authors. When he first started indexing, he worked with several authors and found that it was a difficult task at best. But now he realizes that it is an untapped market and that if you can educate the author about indexes that the process goes much smoother.

Ergonomics: Saving Your Self

Shawnalea Shelly, an occupational therapist from Situs, Inc. with 11 years of experience in rehabilitation of hand and upper body injuries, gave an excellent presentation on ergonomic care in the workplace. She began by explaining that to reduce fatigue and injury, we need to maintain the natural S-curve in our spine. Several tips for doing this include keeping our hip flexion open (raising the leg forward by a movement at the hip joint) rather than at a 90° angle, and spreading the work of posture across a greater number of muscles. We can do this by simply tilting our seat forward with a wedge shaped cushion and with proper back support.



Shawnalea also discussed optimizing our workplace ergonomics.

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Chair

The optimal chair is adjustable with an intuitive ease. It also features a seat that has a five-point base with two wheels per castor, adjustable arm rests, and a back rest that can move up and down as well as forward and back. In addition, it

can tilt forward and backwards as well as adjust to a range of heights. For seat height, a good rule is to measure from the floor to the top of your knee. The chair seat needs to be able to reach at least that height.

Desk

The ideal desk is elbow height with enough surface area to keep computer monitors at a proper distance and facilities (e.g., phone) within easy reach. You can purchase adjustable desks, but they can be very pricey. A simple solution may be to adjust the height of your current desk by either cutting off a portion of the legs, or placing something under the legs to increase height. Often-used drawers should be easy to reach as well.

Computer Monitor

To ease eyestrain and neck muscle fatigue, the monitor should be a proper distance away, about 22 to 24 inches for a 17-inch monitor. When sitting in your chair and looking straight ahead, your eyes should align with the top third of your monitor. Other features to reduce eyestrain are color range and contrast, size and resolution of letters, absence of flicker, and frame and screen color difference.

Computer Keyboard

If your keyboard is always on your main desktop, you'll want to have your desktop 1-inch below elbow height so that your wrists remain in a neutral position. Keep the keyboard flat. Your mouse should be close and at the same level, or a flat level if you use a tilted forward keyboard. If you have wrist pain when using your mouse, try a track ball. Shawnalea suggested the Kensington Turbo Mouse. Voice activation software is another option.

Shawnalea finished her talk with a few tips to keep in mind when working for an extended time.

- ♦ Take microbreaks — when the computer is working, relax your arms and shoulders.
- ♦ Take a 5-7 minute break every hour.
- ♦ Get up and walk around on your breaks.
- ♦ If you're on the phone a lot, consider a headset to avoid the kink in you neck from wedging the handset between your shoulder and ear.
- ♦ Use task lighting to illuminate the page you're working on without flooding light around the monitor.

Index Peer Review

After Shawnalea's wonderful talk, the audience again broke into small groups. Then each group member shared an index for critique by the other group members. The indexers were very gentle, providing a safe place to get positive feedback. Each of us had an index we had done or were currently working on and shared our thoughts on styles with each other.

All in all, well worth the 400-mile round trip!! If you didn't make this one, do plan to be at the one next spring. It's a great opportunity for networking and learning.

(Continued from page 1)

access index for a vast array of medical topics. It was a different kind of challenge and her client was an absolute pleasure to work with. Best of all, he wrote an unsolicited thank-you letter which she occasionally attaches to her résumé when introducing herself to prospective clients.

Advice for Aspiring Indexers

- ♦ Join ASI and become active in the local chapter.
- ♦ Develop a plan for learning the art of indexing and get feedback on initial work. Taking some type of course is essential, assuming you get to create indexes and have someone critique them.
- ♦ Make it easy for an experienced indexer to say yes to some form of mentoring.
- ♦ Enclose an excellent sample index if you are truly interested in working for a particular company.
- ♦ Go with your strengths when creating your initial marketing strategy. There must be something in your background or approach that will make the prospective client want to take a chance on hiring you.
- ♦ Remember the four P's of marketing: persistence, patience, practice, and a positive attitude.



Olympia, Louise's rottweiler

Volunteer Corner

by Sherry Smith

The talented volunteers at the PNW chapter are working on four major projects to help indexing gain visibility in the Northwest. What are these projects? Read on . . .



On November 6-9, volunteers from the PNW chapter are staffing an information booth for ASI at the 1999 National Book Publishing Conference and Book Industry Trade Show, in Portland. These people will hand out the PNW/ASI chapter brochure, the national ASI brochure, the PNW directory, and the national indexers' directory. The willing volunteers are Shaula Biggs, Nancy Donnelly, Amy Harmala, Robin Hilp, Kari Kells, Cynthia Landeen, Jeri Lee, Phyllis Linn, and Martha Osgood. Cheryl Landes, the PNW Marketing Coordinator, has managed all the details of scheduling.



One of the items being given to publishers at this conference is the PNW chapter brochure. This brochure was designed and written by the marketing committee, which consists of Cheryl Landes, Nancy Donnelly, Robin Hilp, Martha Osgood, Jeri Lee, Heather Marsch, and Phyllis Linn. The purpose of the brochure — tell publishers what indexers can do for them. The brochure was available for viewing at the October meeting.

University of Washington Offers Technical Indexing

by Kari Kells

The University of Washington Department of Technical Communication will offer an indexing course meeting from 6-9 pm every Monday from April 10 through May 8, 2000, and taught by Kari Kells. This course is part of the certificate program in Technical Writing and Editing offered through the UW Extension office. You do not have to be a UW student nor do you have to be interested in the technical communications field to take this course. Basic indexing skills are the primary focus, but editing indexes, choosing indexing software, embedding indexes, planning indexing into project schedules and finding clients will also be covered.

For more info, call 206-543-2310 or 1-800-543-2320 and ask about course number TC N100 or visit http://www.edoutreach.washington.edu/extinfo/certprog/twe/advtechcom_crs.htm.



Chapter meetings with full, all-day agendas happen because many members help. In July, the PNW chapter held its meeting in Richland, Washington. Members from eastern Washington and Idaho secured the meeting room, provided overnight lodging for members from the western side of the Cascades, procured lunch and break refreshments, telephoned members about attendance, taxied members to and from the airport and last, but not least, hosted an informal dinner and dessert. These volunteers were Drew Proctor, Sue Carver, Shirley Hansen, Linnea Marshall, Sharon Keever, and Kristin Manke.

The Portland meeting for October 23 was being planned while this newsletter is being written. Again, many members are helping by finding and securing a meeting location, contacting publishers and speakers for presentations, making presentations at the meeting and last, but not least, procuring food for hungry members. Robin Hilp, Deone Terrio, Julie Kawabata, Jeri Lee, and Colleen Dunham and your favorite officer team did the volunteer work for this meeting.

The last project was completed by Helen Passey. She created a member database so that it will be easier to make labels and contact all members. The labels for the October meeting came from her work.

Work continues on the Web site and the newsletter (the one you are reading).

Volunteering in your profession is an excellent way to meet other indexers. Those indexers will become friends, will help you with questions and problems of indexing, and may provide you with referrals for jobs. If you have skills to offer the PNW chapter, please contact one of the coordinators:

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

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

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

Speaker's Bureau Coordinator: Cynthia Landeen
bookindexer@worldnet.att.net or 541-345-3079

Marketing 101: Cultivating Relationships

by Randl Ockey

The next time you pick up the phone to call your insurance agent, accountant, or some other expert advisor, stop and think for a moment about why you're calling that particular person. Chances are that the services you receive from this person won't differ radically from those available from many other qualified people engaged in the same business. It's also likely that you will pay about the same for services received from this person that you would expect to pay from someone else. In actuality, you may not even know how your expert's fees compare to others' fees — and what's more, you may not care.

So if neither the product nor the price is truly distinctive, what is it that motivated you to use this person's services a second, third, fourth, etc., time? The answer is very simple: that expert advisor has established a comfortable, professional friendship with you, has demonstrated that he can meet your needs, and, in the process, has earned your trust. If we want repeat business from publishers, we've got to establish comfortable relationships with editors, demonstrate that we can meet their needs, and earn their trust. So how do you do those three things?

Developing a Friendship

Editors aren't going to call you back if they feel uncomfortable talking with you, so part of your job is to help the relationship reach an acceptable level of comfort for both you and the editor. Listening for "connection points" — points of common interest or experience — and taking advantage of every reasonable opportunity to communicate are two very simple things you can do to develop the comfortable, professional friendship that is going to help assure repeat business.

Finding connection points requires a little thought, some good listening skills, and a willingness to take a few risks. As you prepare to call that editor, think of connections that might exist. Have you indexed books very similar to those produced by this publisher or does this publisher publish in an area of special interest to you? Have you visited (or always wanted to visit) the city, state, or region where this publisher is located? Has the city where this publisher is located been experiencing unusual weather? Did that city's professional sports team just beat your favorite team? The possibilities for establishing connection points are endless. Using them effectively requires your best listening skills to hear the cues along with a willingness to take some conversational risks.

Most of the time, you'll guess right and feel those all-important threads of friendship beginning to form.

As in most other relationships, frequent communication is critical to the relationship you want to have with your editors. You will need to look beyond the obvious, such as "thanks for sending this project my way" notes and holiday greeting cards, to be a really effective communicator. Did you receive payment on the last project in a little over two weeks instead of the more common 30 days? A brief e-mail expressing appreciation to the editor is probably in order. Did you call yesterday asking for work and not get any, but the editor took a few minutes to visit with you anyway? A card that just says, "thanks for taking a few minutes out of your busy schedule to visit with me, I'll stay in touch" might be appropriate. Did you just install new indexing software, purchase a fax machine, establish a new e-mail address, etc.? A "news release" type of letter to all of your editors would probably be a good idea. A good rule of thumb is, "when in doubt, over-communicate."

Demonstrating Competence and Earning Trust

Obviously, all of the friendship-building in the world isn't going to do any good if the product you're producing is less than excellent. You want to know how the editor feels about your work, so why not ask? Tell your editors how important it is to you that the indexes you write meet their needs and expectations, and ask for feedback. There may well be things the editor would like you to do differently, but unless you ask, you're unlikely to find out what those things are. If nothing else, this gives the editor a chance to verbalize how pleased he/she is with your work. As you carefully follow instructions, ask questions and verify assumptions, respect deadlines, and consistently do top-quality work, you'll gain the trust of your editors. Once you've earned that trust, you've established the basis for a mutually beneficial, long-term working relationship. Mission accomplished!

In all likelihood, you will never have a face-to-face meeting with most of the editors who send you work. But if you're willing to make the effort and take the relatively minor risks necessary to cultivate a relationship with those editors, you can become a very real and a very important person to them. You'll quickly find yourself with plenty of work, and along the way you'll get to know some very nice people. That's a pretty hard combination to beat.

Recent Indexes by PNW/ASI Members

compiled by Helen Schinske

Kari Kells

- ♦ *Real World Adobe GoLive* Peach Pit Press
- ♦ *Fire Service Loss Control* by Fire Protection Publications
- ♦ *Pumping Apparatus Driver/Operator Handbook* by Fire Protection Publications
- ♦ *After the Gold Rush: Creating a True Profession of Software Engineering* by Steve McConnell, Microsoft Press

Martha Osgood

- ♦ *Transforming Christianity and the World* by John B. Cobb, Jr., Orbis Books
- ♦ *And Now I See . . .* by Robert Barron, Crossroad Publishing Company
- ♦ *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* ed. William R. Farmer, Trinity Press International
- ♦ *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* by Sir Anthony Buzzard and Dr. Charles Hunting, International Scholars Publications
- ♦ *The War on Population* by Jacqueline Kasun, Ignatius Press
- ♦ *The Last Bonanza Kings* by Ferol Egan, University of Nevada Press
- ♦ *The Maverick Spirit — Building the New Nevada* ed. Richard Davies, University of Nevada Press

Marilyn Priestley

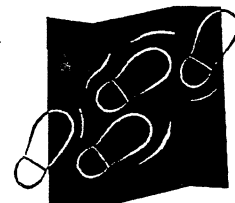
- ♦ Indexed part of *The New Cognitive Neurosciences*, published by MIT Press (Maria Coughlin had an indexing emergency, and hired several people to work on the index of this 1,200 or so page book. Marilyn was one of them.)

Sherry L. Smith

- ♦ *The Charter School Challenge* by Bryan C. Hassel
- ♦ *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* by Ashton B. Carter & William J. Perry
- ♦ *Black Unionism in the Industrial South* by Ernest Obadele-Starks
- ♦ *American Foreign Policy & Yugoslavia, 1939-1941* by Ivo Tasovac
- ♦ *The Instrument Flight Training Manual* by Peter Dogan

Breffni Whelan

- ♦ *Contemporary Regulatory Policy* by Eisner, Worsham and Ringquist
- ♦ *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa* by Chazam et al.
- ♦ *Democracy and Development in India* by Sharma

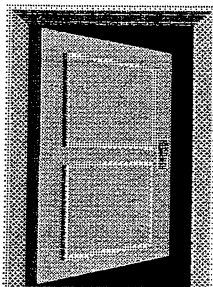


Nominations for Officers Accepted

by Sherry Smith

Each fall, the nominations committee searches for volunteers who are willing to serve as officers for the PNW chapter. There are three officer positions in the chapter — president, vice-president/president-elect and secretary/treasurer. Duties and responsibilities for each office are detailed in the bylaws which can be seen at the chapter's Web site.

Nominations may be made by anyone and anyone may nominate themselves. All nominees must be current members of the American Society of Indexers.



The current secretary/treasurer is willing and would like to be nominated for another term. Additional nominations will be accepted.

Nominations are needed for the vice-president/president-elect position.

This year, the current vice-president is unable to move into the presidential position. The current president is willing and would like to be nominated for another term. Additional nominations will be accepted.

Ballots will be mailed to all chapter members in late January/early February. The new officers will begin their terms on June 1, 2000.

If you would like to serve as an officer or if you would like to nominate someone to serve as an officer, contact one of the members on the Nominations Committee.

- Colleen Dunham, colleend@microsoft.com
- Robin Hilp, rolybear@yahoo.com
- Kari Kells, indexwest@mindspring.com
- Cynthia Landeen, bookindexer@worldnet.att.net
- Drew Proctor, dproctor@oneworld.owt.com

How Did You Get Here? The Origins of Several Indexers

by Mary Ratcliffe

As someone fairly new to the field of indexing, I find it fascinating to hear how others got their start. So I took up the assignment of interviewing several indexers in PNW/ASI about their beginnings. What I found were stories as varied as the individuals contacted. As an additional note, I asked each indexer if ASI made a contribution, or assisted them in their new vocation. Their answers help to show how ASI plays a faceted role in the indexing community. Here are the tales of how Nancy Donnelly, Kari Kells, and Randl Ockey began their indexing careers.

Nancy Donnelly

Nancy first started indexing when she was a graduate student at the University of Washington in 1984. She was a research assistant for a professor of anthropology, helping him with a new book. At one point he suggested she index the book. Nancy thought, “why not?”

Cornell University Press, the publisher, sent her a pamphlet done in the 1950s that described how to index on slips of paper. It was a labor-intensive process involving completely writing out every entry down to the sub-sub-entry on its own 3x5 slip. This process was repeated over and over, and the thousands of slips generated would be filed in alphabetical order in boxes — many boxes.

“Eventually,” she remembers, “you would finish the raw entries, and then you would edit them down to a thing of beauty.”

Nancy supposes that indexes took a year or two to construct in the 1950s, and that “indexers were noted for their patience — and maybe for writer’s cramp — but that all the time to think about the work might just produce great indexes.” She continues, “but this was 1984 and I had a simple computer. . . so I constructed the index in a word-processing program in about three weeks of essentially full-time work.” She thought it was like putting together a puzzle, but being unsure of herself, she read the book over and over to make sure she didn’t miss anything vital.

Of that first index, she doesn’t remember receiving any guidance about specific items to include so she was “sort of flying blind.” She recalls, “I’ve no idea how it came out because I never could look at it again — I was afraid of finding a real howler. However, it seemed to be well received, so I felt good about having done it.”

Nancy didn’t do any more indexing until she indexed her

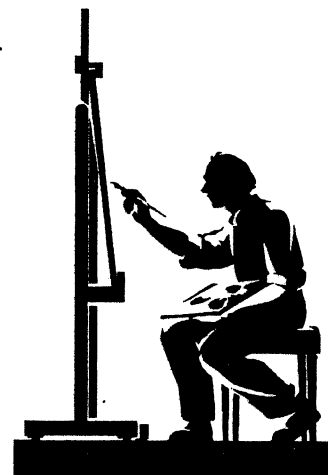
own book in 1993. Then, in 1995 she was asked to index a couple more academic books written by a friend of hers. At that same time, she was looking for a career change from community college teaching, so she applied at several high-tech contracting agencies. Microsoft hired her, where she has been indexing ever since.

Nancy points out that starting at Microsoft was “essentially starting from scratch.” Team indexing in a high-tech environment is quite different from being “at home immersed in an engrossing book” and indexing however one wants. “Still,” she says, “I got good training from my wonderful manager, and I feel more confident now.”

ASI has only recently played a role in Nancy’s life and career. She first heard of ASI in 1998, so she was “floundering around on my own for long time.” She points out that some of the workshops and training programs would have been helpful in the early going. She adds, “As you can tell from my story, though, indexing was peripheral in my life until just the last few years. If I had known about ASI, I probably wouldn’t have joined — I wasn’t an indexer!” She now gets a lot out of her membership with ASI and is even considering taking the USDA course. “Just to keep my hand in book indexing,” she explains, “There’s always more to learn.”

Kari Kells

Kari learned indexing while pursuing her Master’s in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. She was on track, expecting to become a reference librarian, until she walked into an indexing class. Within five minutes Kari “knew that indexing was for me.” Her instructor started the class by describing how, as a child, she organized her photos in shoeboxes by category. Some examples were “family, mom,” “family, sister,” “friends, Suzie,” and “pets, Fido.” It was an epiphany for Kari. “At that moment,” she recalls, “I knew I found the perfect career for me. I’ve always organized my record albums by genre, then alphabetically by artist name, then chronologically. I categorize



(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

my spices (not alphabetically, mind you, but by recipe and frequency of use)." She goes on to add that she used "to sort M&Ms by color before eating them," and that her filing cabinets have always been "user friendly."

Kari went on to finish school and receive her degree. She immediately took a full-time position as a reference librarian. Almost right away, she knew that it was not what she wanted to do full-time. "Within the first week," she says, "I felt a stronger urge to start my indexing business." She also became involved in regional informal meetings of indexers.

Kari sent out about 200 cold query letters in a quest to get a "good start" in her venture and actually landed a project in about 6 months. She hasn't looked back since.

When asked if ASI played a role, or assisted her, in getting started, Kari had this to say: "no, not as an organization. However, someone I met through volunteering for an ASI project (within a few months of joining) made all the

"Desperately I tried to pare the number down, to keep only those books that were absolutely necessary. But spread across the floor, each volume was its own best defense. Every book seemed precious beyond compare. How could I argue that *The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson* was worth more than *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, or that *On the Origin of Species* should be left behind to make room for *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*?"

"I had almost decided to save nothing for myself, when a book still standing on the half-emptied shelf caught my eye. I had never read it, had never done more than glance through its thousand pages, but suddenly I knew it was the third book I would take. I lifted it down, traced its title with my finger: *Index: A-Z*.

I could not save all the stories, could not hope to preserve all the information — that was too vast, too disparate, perhaps even too dangerous. But I could take the encyclopedia's index, could try to keep that master list of all that had once been made or told or understood."

When civilization collapses, a young woman debates what to take with her as she prepares to travel into the woods (*Into the Forest* by Jean Hegland).

by Colleen Dunbam

difference in the world! During the first 2-3 years most of my projects and income came through referrals from one very busy colleague I met through ASI." Hence, Kari highly recommends volunteering to anyone who is serious about indexing. "It's an easy and fun way to meet experienced, busy indexers who do a lot of referrals," she says, "they much prefer to refer projects to indexers they know personally."

Randl Ockey

Randl got his start in indexing after 22 years of working in library and public administration. In fact, the need to find a new career direction from his current one was one of three things that got him started. Another was the encouragement of his wife. He recalls that she saw his need for a change in careers long before he did. She gathered information from ASI and "was ready with that information at the right time." The third thing that got Randl going was attending a PNW/ASI meeting, "where we received answers to questions and lots of encouragement."

ASI has played a very large role in helping Randl get started. Back issues of *Keywords* helped him in deciding whether or not he wanted to be an indexer. The ASI publications, *Starting an Indexing Business* and *Marketing Your Indexing Services*, were "a great help" in setting up his business and finding clients. He has further kudos for PNW/ASI. "My involvement in PNW/ASI activities has provided me with good friends, encouragement during a few difficult moments, and people to call when I'm stumped."

As Nancy, Kari, and Randl have exhibited, the path to a career in indexing is varied and individual. One can come from all walks of life and find a place as an indexer. And one common thread is seen throughout: PNW/ASI is a great organization that supports both new and experienced indexers.

See Index-NW for new survey!

This time we'll focus on personality-related questions. I've observed some interesting patterns as I chat with and visit the homes of my indexing colleagues. I think you will be surprised by some of these answers.

Note, to facilitate more discussion about the statistics, this survey will be posted on the chapter's listserv, Index-NW. I'll collect the statistics from the listserv and the information will be published in the newsletter.

by Kari Kells

Chapter Meeting in the Desert

by Kristin Manke

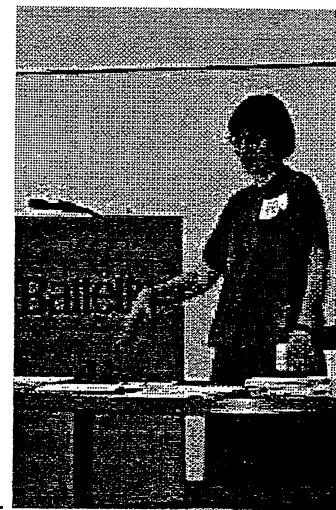
The July 24 chapter meeting was a success beyond all of our expectations! Twenty-four people from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington attended the 6-hour meeting in Richland, Washington (200 miles SE of Seattle) to learn about writing and editing indexes. Kari Kells, who teaches the USDA Basic Indexing course and her own Indexing Basics seminars, taught the workshop.

After a short business meeting with recognition of the hard-working volunteers, Kari began her workshop by asking folks to tell everyone how they had found indexing (see *How Did You Get Here*, page 9). People relaxed, shared stories, and felt much closer to each other. John Dalton compared it to a big group hug.

Next, Kari discussed the process of creating an index. She led a spirited class through the process of creating and editing indexes. For those who had completed their "homework," creating an index for a short article on indexing, Kari had provided written feedback. Everyone then got into smaller groups and talked about her comments on their entries. One kept hearing "oh, why didn't I do that," and some "yes, I did that entry well."

To close, Kari talked about marketing. She began with an overview of the publishing process, described how it is *supposed* to work and compared that process to how it *really* works. This brought some chuckles from the audience, especially when the amount of time to complete the project was discussed. Then, she launched into suggestions for finding work and maintaining relationships with publishers. These suggestions included being an active chapter member, sending out Christmas letters (if you do that sort of thing), and talking to employment agencies.

After the meeting, about 20 or so indexers went to Red Robin for dinner, sang "Happy Birthday" to the folks at the next table, and then went to Drew Proctor's house for coffee and dessert on the back patio. Many of us didn't get home until after 10 p.m.!



Kari Kells leading the summer chapter meeting

Indexers' Picnic

by Zoe Holbrooks

"Summer" and "picnic" are practically synonymous, so it's no big chore to gather hardworking indexers for an afternoon of sunshine, food, and socializing.

Or so you'd think, wouldn't you? Folks in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and other places with normal seasons can plan outdoor events without regard to the weather report. Not so along the I-5 corridor!

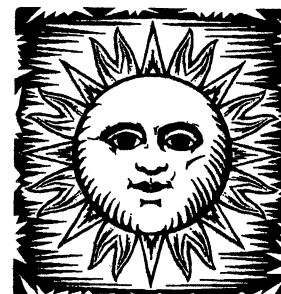
Luckily for us, in spite of record dreariness for months, when September 11 rolled around Seattle was at its sparkling photogenic best. Gasworks Park, sitting at the foot of the Wallingford neighborhood on the north shore of Lake Union, basked in warmth. Pristine blue skies, mild breezes, and silvery sequined waters lapping lush green slopes completed the picture perfect real-time postcard.

Indexers from Oregon and Washington, some with family or friends in tow, produced a delicious potluck feast that

included two gourmet cheesecakes, fabulous salads and casseroles, fresh fruit, and other great nibbles. Gathered around a big picnic table in the shade, old friends and new acquaintances swapped anecdotes and caught up on everyone's doings. A student beginning the University of Washington's library degree program showed up, as did an Oregonian hoping to learn indexing. Both enjoyed the warm welcome from "old hands" and appreciated the advice offered.

By the end of the afternoon, we were all relaxed, pleasantly surfeited, and caught up on gossip. There were no significant leftovers and no mess to speak of. Clean-up took only 3 minutes. A good time was had by all.

See you next year!



*Sun, food, and indexers
— what a blast!*

Indexers' Tea

by Cynthia Landeen

The Pacific Northwest Chapter covers more than one million square miles. This geographic expanse has inspired members to discover new and creative ways to make professional connections. On Saturday, October 10, Cynthia Landeen hosted an informal indexers' tea in Eugene, Oregon. Here is her report of that gathering.

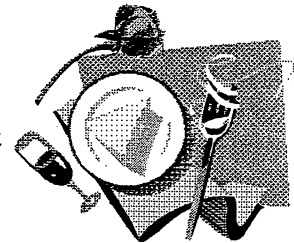
On Saturday, I hosted the second informal gathering of indexers in Eugene, Oregon. The idea for the first gathering began in the spring of 1999 when I was an aspiring and trained indexer. I had been to several chapter meetings, but I still wanted to have closer connections with local indexers to whom I might turn to with the odd, small question when I received my first indexing jobs. I had met Martha Osgood, and I also wanted to meet Do Mi Stauber. So I contacted Do Mi, and with her encouragement, we worked around her schedule to set up a get-together. I invited everyone listed in the ASI publications from the Eugene area, and six people (if I include myself) arrived. I found it, well, fun of course, but also I felt more official for having talked with other professionals.

As no one volunteered a next local gathering, even though I myself am quite reserved, I thought I would have one more. As a newer indexer in town, I feel the responsibility for reaching out. Martha reminded me that many are not

official members of ASI, especially newbies, wannabes, and lurkers. Therefore, this time I put the invitation out on the Web. On Saturday afternoon, 10 indexers from Seattle, Cottage Grove, Eugene, Vida, Bend, and Dexter arrived with munchies in hand.

Conversation topics covered marketing, letterheads, e-mail etiquette, personal backgrounds, growth in Oregon, parenting, making contact with publishers, the generation gaps, chapter meetings, the lack of ampersands in indexes, and the number of indexes completed each year. The many varieties of food were wonderful, and a good time was had by all, including my dog Bill.

I'm hoping that the idea of informal get-togethers has caught on in Eugene and someone else will take responsibility for the next one. If you think this sounds fun but are worried about the amount of work, it's really no trouble. Everyone brings something and leaves enough for the host so you don't have to cook dinner. I picked up a nice tip from one of the more experienced indexers, and it's a chance to meet people who might find it difficult to travel to the bigger "official" meetings.



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