

compelling and should be sufficient to sway the most recalcitrant or reluctant committee.

Thereafter, it is simply a matter of purchasing the equipment and making application to ABN. Warwick Cathro, Director of Network Services, has made it clear that ABN is very keen to gain the membership of special libraries such as ours, realizing that they have substantial holdings of very specialized materials. So the approval of ABN is not likely to be any real problem. If you require further help, you should contact the ABN Help Desk on 008 02 6155. They will send you an application form and any other necessary information.



THE AUSTRALASIAN RELIGION INDEX : A PROGRESS REPORT

Philip Harvey

For members of the Editorial Management Committee in Melbourne, the months of March and April have been filled with all but feverish activity. Firstly, following recommendations from a number of ANZTLA members, the serial titles to be indexed in the first volume were selected, some fifty-five of them. Then fifteen indexers were asked to work on these.

Arns, Hans (St. Patrick's College, Manly, NSW)
Bright, Judith (St. John's, Auckland)
Cain, Hal (Queen's College; Ridley College, Parkville, Vic)
Carswell, Pam (Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Vic)
Cole, Kay (Corpus Christi, Clayton, Vic)
Davis, Wendy (St. Barnabas College, Adelaide)
Greenwood, Helen (St. John's, Auckland)
Harvey, Philip (Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Vic)
Leggett, Jean (Corpus Christi, Clayton, Vic)

McIntosh, Lawrence (Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Vic)
Nichol, Beth (Hewitson Library, Dunedin)
Pryor, Lynn (Whitley College, Parkville, Vic)
Robinson, Kim (Moore Theological College, Newtown, NSW)
Smith, Gai (Catholic Theological Union, Hunters Hill, NSW)
Zweck, Trevor (Löhe Memorial, Luther Seminary, Nth Adelaide)

Each indexer was allocated a certain number of serial titles, the indexing to be done either comprehensively or selectively depending upon the nature of the particular serial.

The Editorial Committee felt that three data sheets were needed to adequately collect all the relevant information: an article data sheet, a serial information sheet, and a book review data sheet. Once these sheets had been drawn up by the Technical Sub-Committee of the Editorial Management Committee, guidelines were devised for them.

Guidelines must not shout orders, they must not fog things up, they must not point down several roads at once. They must be firm, clear and precise. The tone and manner of AACR2 seemed ideal for our purposes, advisory rather than dictatorial. Also, by keeping the guidelines to a necessary minimum, only dealing with the predictable pitfalls and obvious problems, the task would be made easy for the indexers. Indeed, the indexing of articles and book reviews is really a fairly straightforward matter of recording what is on the printed page. The only items of information that may cause some trouble are the subject descriptors, ie. the subject headings or topics assigned to the article.

A decision had to be made about which subject descriptor source to use. Our choice narrowed to *Religion Indexes: thesaurus*, 4th ed., the American Theological Library Association list of descriptors for their indexes, and *Library of Congress subject headings*, 11th ed. After random sampling of both we selected the former because it was truer to the spirit of an index, as distinct from a catalogue; was reliable in its revisions; contained very many specialised religious terms not found in *LCSH* (eg Docetism); was consistent with *Religion index one*; and was easy to manage and consult.

It was decided that *LCSH* could be used as a backup wherever the Thesaurus manifestly failed to supply the descriptor. However, it had to be stressed (and needs always to be stressed) that the Thesaurus is

always the chief source, *LCSH* a last resort. This is an important caution for cataloguers used to *LCSH*, who may go back to it out of force of habit or need of comfort. The guidelines make it quite clear that indexers should always say if they have drawn their descriptor from somewhere other than the Thesaurus. This is only right when we are wanting consistency in the finished product and not collisions of similar terms.

After a couple of hiccups with the copying of the Thesaurus at the Riverina-Murray Institute and much breathless debate about style and rules, the final package was dispatched to indexers amidst mingled sighs of relief and expectation.

The indexers should not feel isolated or confused. Open discussion about all aspects of the indexing (problems, comments, queries) is welcomed. Following the editing of the full returns, the editors intend sending remarks to indexers wherever it may be deemed appropriate, to help make the task clearer and easier still in future.

Once things are in full swing the next task of the Technical Subcommittee will be to consider any revisions that need to be made for a second edition of the guidelines, and to compile a list of Australian terms not appearing in the Thesaurus or *LCSH*, for a projected supplement to the Thesaurus. Naturally, the indexers are invited to send any revision suggestions and any Australian terms that come out of their indexing practice.