

The Revised New Zealand Mentoring Scheme

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This article provides an update of the revised New Zealand Mentoring Scheme for new indexers, outlining how the scheme has evolved and the creation of the ANZSI New Zealand Series.

Background

In 2005 the New Zealand Branch of ANZSI set up a mentoring scheme similar to the one initiated by the Victoria Branch in 2003. The term 'mentoring' describes one-on-one advice to a new indexer in creating an index to a full-sized book. In 2006 ANZSI decided to turn the Victoria and New Zealand branch schemes into a society-wide scheme. In June 2008 the ANZSI Council decided to temporarily suspend this scheme because of a need for a review of guidelines and procedures.

In March 2009 the New Zealand Branch voted to revive its mentoring scheme, which had been working well in New Zealand, as the society-wide scheme was still suspended.

New Zealand Branch Mentoring Scheme

Our training philosophy aims to educate and train new indexers by offering or endorsing suitable indexing courses, and then providing a mentoring scheme so students can apply the knowledge they have learned. Some of the historical texts that are indexed as part of the scheme are quite challenging and provide a real example for the students, as there is a timeframe and the index will be reviewed and published at the end. New indexers can then list the project in their entry in the New Zealand Branch's Freelance Directory.

We then further assist new indexers by referring work to them, offering to check their first few indexes and being available for queries. In this way new indexers learn in a supported environment. In the past the branch has offered training courses and then sometimes watched new indexers fall by the wayside because they were too timid to ask for help or did not know how to apply their knowledge or obtain work.

The NZ scheme has a timeframe of 6–12 weeks. Some of our mentoring projects go on for longer than that (especially over the Christmas period), but the expectation is that when a mentee starts a project they are committing themselves to it within a short period of time. Any delays or extensions are only made in agreement with the mentor. This is in order to provide the feeling of a deadline as in commercial settings, and to make sure projects do not falter.

ANZSI New Zealand Series

The mentoring scheme also enables the branch to have unindexed books in New Zealand indexed, and make the indexes available to libraries and other organizations. Doing

so, we believe, also helps keep alive the concept of book indexing and raises the profile of the society. The copyright remains with the branch. In 2010 the process of publishing the finished indexes and launching our own ANZSI New Zealand Series was initiated. This made it apparent that each index needed to be up to a certain standard, and that there needed to be consistency within the series. A format for the series was decided on, two committee members now review each index, and reviewing guidelines were being drawn up at the time of writing.

Once the index is ready for publication, 12 copies are made – one for the mentee, one for the mentor, two for the National Library for depositing, and the rest for sale. Ten copies used to be made but sales of each index have been between five and nine copies each, so this number was recently increased to 12. This only includes New Zealand holdings, and Australian organizations are now being contacted. A small profit has been made from sales to date.

Recently we received a request for a 'subscription' to the series, and a standing order for any new indexes in the series has been organized.

Some of the issues encountered

Initially the expectation was that a mentoring project would take five or six hours of the mentor's time. Reviews and getting the index ready for publication have increased this time to a more realistic 10–13 hours, with the latter being required when two small indexes are done. The mentoring fee was also increased from NZ\$250 to \$375 (with \$50 going to the branch for expenses) to better reflect the actual time taken.

One of the mentees used embedded indexing and sent the embedded index file to the mentor and reviewers. This made it very time-consuming to review and edit. Hence a policy was made that while mentees can use embedding software to compile their index, the finished index needs to be sent to the mentor and reviewers as a Word file.

As there is no author to answer queries about the 19th-century books we are indexing, mentees sometimes need to do a bit of research regarding old terms, current usage and so on. Some mentees got rather carried away with research, and this resulted in lengthy projects, and in one case the compiling of supplementary tables. Mentors now remind mentees that this is an indexing project, not a research one!

Future

The NZ Branch recently decided that the current mentored indexes and any future ones should be submitted to an online repository which is interested in hosting ANZSI indexes and will pay 50 per cent royalties. Other online options are also being investigated.

The NZ Branch is also aware that there is a need to index some modern works that lack an index. Currently there is a project under way to index a modern book chosen by the mentee, and branch members can suggest other modern works of substance that need an index. Proposals can be sent to the mentoring coordinator. It has been suggested that members of the branch who are interested in further training index such a work as part of a group training exercise.

There has also been interest in a database mentoring project from a branch member, and this is being explored with an Australian mentor.

In summary

The New Zealand Mentoring Scheme has been very successful for mentees and the branch. To date we have six published indexes in the ANZSI New Zealand Series, with two more mentoring projects currently underway.

References

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Tordis Flath trained as an indexer in 1988 in England working for Indexing Specialists. She then worked in-house for The Listener, which she indexed along with several TV magazines for four years. In 1997 she began freelancing in back-of-the-book and journal indexes. She helped in founding the New Zealand Branch of ANZSI in 2004, was president from 2004–2006, a committee member in 2008 and vice-president since 2009. In 2004 she won the ANZSI Medal for her index to the biography of painter Toss Woollaston. She has been a mentor for the NZ Branch Mentoring Scheme since 2005 and also organizes and runs training courses. She is currently organising the 2013 ANZSI Conference in Wellington.

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