

Presidential Musings



Something slightly dismaying slipped into the lower reaches of the headlines recently. It was a marginal thing, perhaps – what with pandemics, boats clogging up the Suez Canal, Piers Morgan’s beef with the Duchess of Sussex and so on – but it was one that snagged my attention and that, I think, touches on the territory indexers care about. It was that Yahoo Answers was being closed.

Not much of a loss, most of us will on the face of it think. Here was a place where you could ask, for instance, “Why is my tongue furry?” or “Do marmosets have night vision?” or “Why does my cat vibrate?”, and receive an answer that was more likely than not to be facetious, or insulting, or plain wrong. Google and Wikipedia and any number of other forums (I might ask Yahoo Answers: “Why does autocorrect not let me type ‘fora?’”) do this better.

But there’s still something sad about the way it happened. Yahoo gave the world thirty days’ notice of the site’s closure; and the countless terabytes of data it has accumulated over its 16 years of vigorous life will vanish from the Internet permanently at the end of June.

That latter detail is concerning, and it’s a bit of a bellwether. Here’s a tech company that has built up a huge collective resource of human . . . I don’t want to say knowledge, but human *something*. And when it ceases to be profitable, they pull the plug and it vanishes. No chance to archive it or let indexers at it. It’s as if the messy-play section of our digital Great Library of Alexandria has been put to the torch. Archaeologists, after all, learn from the rubbish-heaps and middens of the past as much if not more than they learn from its treasure-houses.

Isn’t this a resource? Isn’t, in all its inanity, Yahoo Answers – part of the history and sociology of the early Internet – something worth preserving? Hwaer cwom, as the Anglo-Saxons liked to say.

Sam Leith

Society News

Executive Board Report

The Executive Board has met twice recently, on 1 February and 8 March. In February, **Rachel Gee** was welcomed to her first meeting of EB (where she’s shadowing the role of Training Director), and **Nicola King** was re-elected as Chair; local group representation was also confirmed. EB discussed various proposals to improve the online workshop offer, and noted the need to ensure students in particular felt connected to SI. At the March meeting, proposals to ensure Course Advisers could make regular

checks on students were approved.

Both meetings discussed the preparations for NID 2021 – necessarily an online event – and the potential for an online conference in 2021. SI members will be surveyed to see if there is enthusiasm p3

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Sidelights April 2021

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Missed an article in *Sidelights*?
Back issues and the cumulative index for 2006–2015 are on [the website](#)

July 2021 *Sidelights*

Copy deadline

Friday 2 July 2021

(for electronic distribution mid-July)

p2 ↻ for an online event. EB also noted the review in progress of the revised NISO indexing standards.

EB noted at the March meeting that, following the 2021 renewals period, membership was reduced

by 10%, despite a larger than usual number of new joiners during 2020. Non-renewals were mainly retiring members and students; recent changes to the training course and to approaches to student engagement would, it was hoped, increase

student retention. However, further attention would need to be given to recruitment.

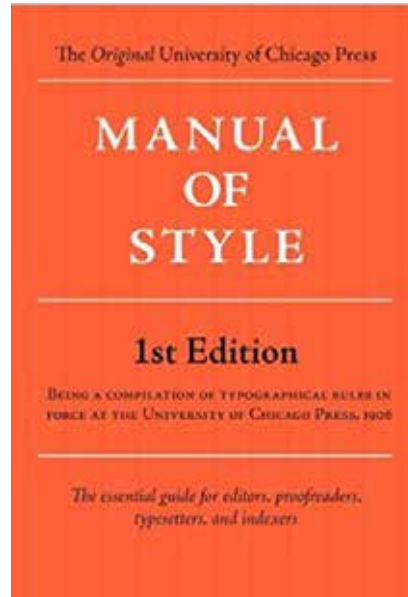
Tanya Izzard, Minutes Secretary
tanya@tanyaizzard.co.uk

Behind the Chair

The longest winter I can remember drew to a close and spring started to shine a brighter light into my dusty corners. As a distraction from getting on with spring cleaning, I started to think about the [aims and objectives](#) of the Society, and the [Code of Professional Conduct](#) that we all agree to uphold when we join, and every year when we renew our membership. As a Society, we aim to promote good indexing (the principles and good practice as laid out in the International Standard for indexing ISO 999 and in other standard texts on indexing) and, as individuals, we have duties to the profession, to each other, and to the Society. Please take a look – if your memory needs jogging – at what they are.

I then started to wonder if we might do a bit more, for everyone, to provide more resources to help us all contribute to fulfilling the aims and objectives and upholding the Code of Conduct. Do we need common tools to help us evaluate our work and critique our own practice? We have a range of terms to classify our members – Advanced Professional, basic, Fellow, Honorary, Joint, Life, Over-70s, Overseas, Professional, students. As individuals we have diverse backgrounds, are at different points in our indexing careers, may have taken different training courses over time, and work in a range of publishing areas, but we are being asked to support a single set of aims and objectives and a one-size-fits-all Code of Conduct.

At the heart of the aims and objectives and the Code of Conduct lies the promotion of good indexing. If I were to ask ten members “What are the characteristics of a good index?” or “How should I evaluate an index?”, would there be a range of answers because we are so diverse or can we



ABOVE: One source of good practice.

BELOW: What user will actually look up all those pages for London?

Lithuania :	23
Liverpool Castle :	206, 218, 221
Lochmaben Castle :	277
Logroño :	39, 46, 47, 50, 63
Loire, River :	44, 103, 111, 112, 113
Lombard Street :	459
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Lormont :	374, 378 note
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Ludgate, Prison :	425
Lusignan :	98
Lussac :	78, 98
Lyme :	79 note
Lys, River :	1

agree on some common ground?

For example, advice for editors and authors on evaluating an index they have commissioned will include looking at the length, style

and format, reviewing the headings, and looking at the locators and at whether there are long strings of page numbers. It's quite hard to check whether the length and style are appropriate, because there might be restrictions that the publisher has imposed. Perhaps not enough pages were available, and a cramped layout will be used to squeeze it all in, leading to a shortish index that's crammed into a few pages but which actually does a good job.

It is much easier to say “a ‘bad index’ can often be spotted by the long strings of locators”, and that we all agree this is a bad thing. It is sometimes assumed that the indexer will not be doing a good job if they allow long strings, and it could be an indication that the indexer wasn't a trained professional at all, and was working with insufficient guidance. A quick check of a selection of recognised resources confirms that there is advice on this issue which is more or less in agreement. The advice in my copy of the Society's Training in indexing Module A is that “Six locators on average is regarded as acceptable; . . . (but more) may be unavoidable”, and Modules A, B and C have sections helping the student learn how to avoid them. Other sources of indexing good practice chime in a similar manner. Nancy Mulvany in *Indexing Books* (1994, p 77) says “Generally, when there are more than five reference locators for a heading, subentries should be added”. Browne and Jermy in *The Indexing Companion* (2007, p 103) suggest “most entries should not have more than five undifferentiated locators”. *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2017, 16.128) plumps for “Main headings unmodified by subentries should not be followed by more than five or six locators”. ↻ p4

p3 However, as professionals, we know there may be times when we have to put up with long strings of locators, however uncomfortable that makes us feel. Publishers who constrict the amount of space we are allowed may accept that longer strings of locators are an acceptable trade-off. So perhaps looking at just one index isn't enough to assess whether we are doing a good job, and we need to look at our style of indexing too. Generally, as individuals, looking at the range

of publishers that we work for and different jobs we have done, perhaps we should ask ourselves questions like "Do I ever include strings of more than five or six locators in my indexes? Do I typically break them down into subheadings and never leave any orphaned at the main heading, or do I do something else?" and "Does what I do depend on the potential readership?"

What other questions might we ask? Self-evaluation can start with using the [Personal Development Plan](#)

as a first step to identify things we might want to do, including identifying areas of strength and weakness such as indexing standards and practice. So let's share a bit about how we approach what we do and what our indexing style is like, the software tools we use to help keep us on track and other tips. What resources might the Society provide to members to help us reflect on what we do and how we do it?

Nicola King
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National Indexing Day



Our fifth National Indexing Day on 30 March was again held online as a result of the current circumstances. The main party was held on Twitter where reaction is more instantaneous, but some posts were also shared on Facebook and LinkedIn. It was a very busy day, but somewhere in the middle of my 15-hour shift I did manage to put the finishing touches to an index that was going to print the next day (the last few pages of proofs only arrived that morning), cook a family meal, and complete some other domestic tasks. I am glad that my twelve-year-old son is currently acting as my sous-chef. I took some time off for a walk in the fresh air the next day to recuperate.

It was wonderful to see more of our members engaging and promoting on Twitter, especially those who are new to the profession. Amongst various blog posts, the most prominent one was by **Paula Clarke Bain**, who put together a fabulous *A-Z of indexing* and published it that morning. Do have a read of it if you haven't seen it yet.

Jan Worrall shared a [short video](#) summarising what indexers do (and don't do), in a very accessible manner.

Liverpool University Press had a discount promotion for **Hazel K.**

Bell's Indexing Biographies on the day and with impeccable timing we also saw the reveal of the cover for Dennis Duncan's forthcoming book *Index, A History of the*, due out in September.

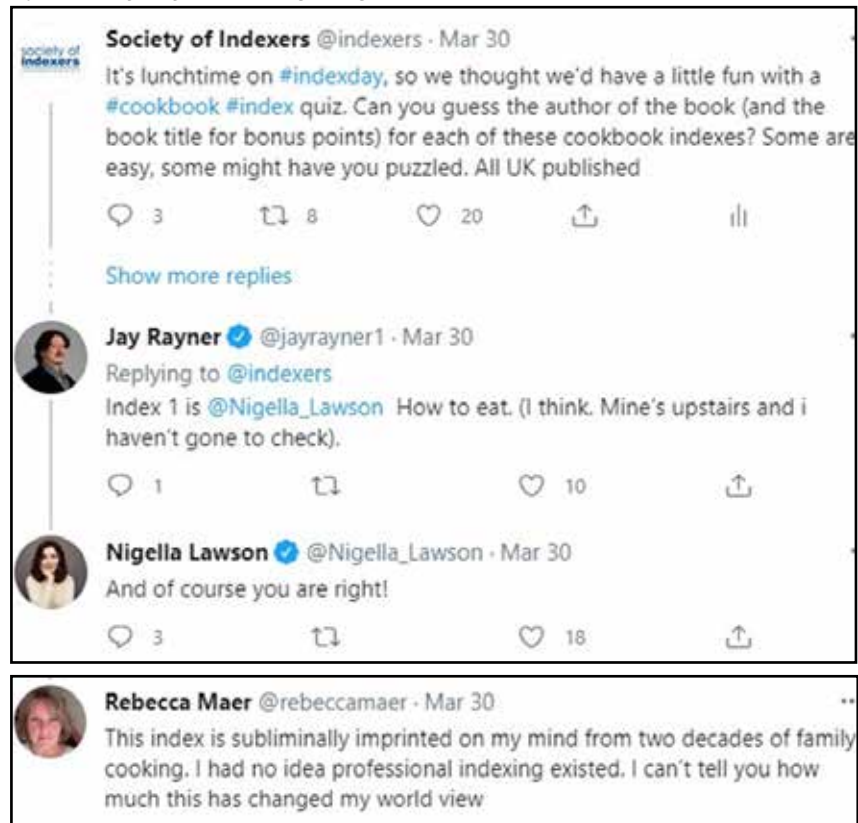
After the success of the biography quiz I put together last year, I decided to try another one, this time from the cookbooks on my shelves. I posted it at lunchtime and it gained some interest, but it was only later on in the evening, just as I was hoping to reveal the answers and put my feet up, that foodie Twitter picked up on it. Jay Rayner had a good go at

guessing who the authors were and we even got a comment and a like from Nigella Lawson herself. It led to great exposure for us and was by far the most popular thread of the day (see the statistics on p 5).

The ultimate reason for #indexday was summarized by Rebecca Maer's tweet in response to Nigella.

If you want to see more of what was discussed, the Wakelet story with the full list of tweets is available [here](#).

Ruth Ellis
website@indexers.org.uk





Top Tweets	Tweets and replies	Promoted	Impressions	Engagements	Engagement rate
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 It's lunchtime on #indexday, so we thought we'd have a little fun with a #cookbook #index quiz. Can you guess the author of the book (and the book title for bonus points) for each of these cookbook indexes? Some are easy, some might have you puzzled. All UK published</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			18,858	1,839	9.8%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 The 5th annual National Indexing Day is here. Join in with #indexday to share the value and joy of a good index. We've got information, news and a quiz coming your way. Tell us about the indexes you love. pic.twitter.com/yOLZoLc4P</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			7,480	90	1.2%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 15 National Indexing Day #indexday will be held on Tuesday 30th March. Do make sure to join us in celebrating the value a quality index adds to all non-fiction publications. ow.ly/FbBp50DYLeY pic.twitter.com/MUXasqiVqX</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			4,843	73	1.5%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 A little history. #indexday was begun in 2017 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of @indexers. G. Norman Knight inaugurated the Society on 30th March 1957 ow.ly/7kFz50EbWtS</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			3,527	14	0.4%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 Cookbook index 1 pic.twitter.com/v73ROO8flQ</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			2,792	1,104	39.5%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 Don't miss out on this offer - this is the latest edition of Hazel's book and it's an essential source if you want a quality biography index. #indexday twitter.com/LivUniPress/st...</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			1,629	13	0.8%
<p>Society of Indexers @indexers · Mar 30 Cookbook index 2 pic.twitter.com/DYs4CFntJu</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			1,528	460	30.1%

Twitter analytics.

An Appreciation: Jane Angus (1931–2021)

Jane was a very supportive member of the Scottish Group from its inception in 1986. But her first direct contact with fellow indexers was probably at the much earlier First Scottish Conference of the Society of Indexers in Edinburgh in 1977. In their report of that conference "Mrs. A.J. Angus and Mrs. A. McCarthy recorded good wishes arriving by telegram from the President, Mr. G. Norman Knight" [*The Indexer*, 10.4.1977, p.301]. Jane later authored some reviews, and contributed regularly to 'Indexes Reviewed'.

Educated at St. Andrews University, Jane took her degree in geology and mineralogy, with supplementary botany. Her early career was in the information department of a major oil company. Marriage to a parish minister found her living in various parts of Scotland. After her husband Keith became minister of

Crathie and ex officio a Domestic Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland, Jane's home was in Deeside.

Her training in indexing was by correspondence course in the Rapid Results College. She was always keen to learn more, and attended SI workshops when possible. Despite having to travel many awkward miles to their usual central belt locations, Jane was a regular attendee at Scottish Group meetings. She was always interested in her colleagues' non-indexing activities: letters and emails were exchanged on community councils, politics with a small 'p', the various incarnations of a Victorian hunting lodge, the iniquities of some conservation bodies.



There was always a twinkle in Jane's eye. We will miss her.

Moyra Forrest and Anne McCarthy

*See also Jane's 'My Past Life',
October 2016*

The Indexer

The International Journal of Indexing

Articles in Volume 39, Issue 1 (March 2021) include:

Indexing without a client: the Mueller report
Peter Rooney

Indexing Arabic names: the basics
Ælfwine Mischler

Embedded indexing with Word: Part 4
Walter Greulich



Did you know that the indexes to the journal are available on *The Indexer* website?

Visit www.theindexer.org/indexes/

You can also search for content in the journal via the LUP website site or through Scopus.

Christine Graham on adventures in medical and biological research

As I suspect is the case for many indexers, ending up in this profession has been for me a series of happy accidents.

From age 11 onwards and into the sixth form, I attended Fairfield High School for Girls in Droylsden, an old-established school founded in 1796 by Mary Tyrrell and the Moravian Church with the sole purpose to educate girls. The founders belonged to the oldest known Protestant church, formed in Bohemia in the 15th century, with customs similar to those of Quakers. This school forms part of a Moravian settlement of streets and church frozen in time and hidden away in central Manchester.

The school was very traditional in outlook (Speech



Moravian Settlement Droylsden Sisters house

Days took place at the Free Trade Hall, now sadly a hotel, in central Manchester) and very arts and academic based. While I was there, the school was ruled over by the headmistress, Miss Gleave (BA English), to be seen marching along the corridor, her black university gown flowing out behind her, followed by deputy head Miss Cusiter (Latin and Greek), similarly attired. A small clique of us (about 5% of the sixth form) went against the trend and pursued our love of science and maths, an uncommon choice for girls in the 1970s. Ironic that today the school is a Science College.

After school, I followed my interests and moved to Cardiff to read for a BSc(Tech) Hons degree in Applied Biology at the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology, and specialised in Microbiology. After life in central Manchester, it was a huge change and great fun to be living on the coast in Wales. My accommodation in the first year was the university hostel in Barry, where the beach met the end of the garden.

Directly after university, as a result of a casual call to the Yorkshire Water Authority, I worked for them as a summer job in Leeds, running a pilot scale sewage plant (not the worst job I ever had, but it included driving vans full of sewage twice a day from the treatment plant to the lab).

I have always loved books, and while at school spent much time idling and browsing in the local library or working on A level projects at Manchester Central Library

in St Peter's Square. While in Leeds, after many failed applications and not settled on which career direction to take, I was offered a job at a science publishers, Information Retrieval. This was an American-owned publishers with an office in Soho, London, tucked away down a little alley behind the theatres on Tottenham Court Road. This job was all hands on, and encompassed, as well as proofreading copy of scientific abstracts and translating Russian text using a dictionary, exploring the back-rooms of London libraries, including the Natural History museum, hunting out obscure abstracts to publish in their *Algology*, *Mycology* and *Protozoology* journals. However, after just over a year of sitting all day at a desk and experiencing the joys of the Northern Line from Finchley into town, I decided that what I really wanted to do was be back in a laboratory.

I worked for the Medical Research Council at the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) in Mill Hill, north London. NIMR has had a long history of outstanding biomedical research since the discovery there in the 1930s by Smith, Andrewes and Laidlaw of the agent that causes human influenza virus (another tricky virus with spikes sticking out of it) and subsequent influenza vaccine development by Stuart-Harris, plus the discovery of interferon by Isaacs and Lindenmann in 1957.

The large imposing NIMR building was said by nearby residents to look like a lunatic asylum, and this was confirmed when the exterior was used by Warner Bros in 2004 to double as Arkham asylum in Gotham City for the filming of *Batman Begins*.



The National Institute of Medical Research building at Mill Hill, 2008 (photo: Sunil Prasanna)

Initially at NIMR, I worked as a Research Officer in the Immunology Division, and then in the Virology Division, progressing through the civil service ranks and completing a PhD through Oxford University based on my work on T-cell immunity to influenza.

p7 Like many people, I met my partner through work and we decided to buy a house in Harrow, northwest London. When the sellers pulled out at the last minute, we rented a flat in nearby Pinner. The flat was opposite an allotment site, and we took a plot that we still have today, 25 years later. And yes, we bought a house in Pinner.

At the new millennium, with the prospects of grants looking less forthcoming, I decided I needed to make a work 'plan B'. My time at the science publishers in Soho gave me the confidence that editing and indexing was something that I could do, but I didn't want to give up the day job yet, so around 2000 I joined both the Society of Indexers and SfEP (now CIEP), to have at my disposal a body of experienced professionals who could give me advice and training on working in publishing as a freelancer.

Soon afterwards, my partner was offered the opportunity to go Australia for eight months to join a group in Melbourne working on malaria. With the prospect of free time, this seemed the ideal opportunity to use my evenings to work through editing and indexing courses and qualifications run by the SfEP, SI and others. I bought the *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook* and emailed every relevant publisher I could find with my cv in the hope that a few might reply and put me on their lists (which thankfully some did). I also started watercolour painting classes at the local college. Somehow, research grants continued and editing/indexing has kept ticking over, so from 2000 I led a double life of medical researcher by day and freelance editor and indexer by night.

Part of the NIMR Virology Division housed the World Health Organisation World Influenza Centre, where new influenza virus strains were received from all over the globe to be monitored and used to design the influenza vaccine for the following year. In 2003, a new highly pathogenic form of influenza called H5N1 was found in Hong Kong and there were fears that this would cause a global pandemic. Consequently, I was part of an institute committee to set up a secure laboratory to house and study this virus. Fortunately, this threat of pandemic never emerged and although in 2009 there was infection worldwide with another new influenza A virus (H1N1), this resulted in generally mild disease.

From 2008 to 2018, I was involved with bioinformatics research on a wide range of infectious diseases. Initial collaborations were set up with the Baylor Institute for

Immunology in Dallas, Texas, and I ended up spending three to six months there every year working with the US group on clinical studies of tuberculosis, HIV and influenza patients in the UK and South Africa. Texans are on the whole outgoing and friendly, but the culture change from UK to Texas was initially a bit of a shock; for example, the sign on the door of the gym telling members to leave their guns in the car or once (as instructed) hiding in the bath with a towel over my head when a tornado went through. I was lucky enough to be there in November 2008 when Barack Obama won his first election and to see the joy that brought to many people, some of whom had queued for hours to vote. Yes, I also did the touristy thing and visited Southfork to see JR Ewing and the 'Grassy Knoll' near where JFK was shot.

NIMR was built in 1913, but by the 2000s the building was becoming beyond cost-effective repair. The Institute finally closed in 2015, the building was demolished in 2018 and some researchers (including myself) moved to central London and merged with Cancer Research UK and University College London scientists to be part of the new Francis Crick Institute next to St Pancras Station and the British Library. Here I worked with clinicians from the University of Leicester and French company bioMérieux based in Lyon to develop a PCR blood test for tuberculosis, similar to the technology being used today for the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 tests.

In the present era, The Crick is focused on research into COVID-19. The British Library car park and Crick facilities have been converted into a drive-through testing centre for NHS staff. The ground floor public exhibition space is now a vaccination centre. But for myself, by 2018, I wanted to spend more time doing other things, including time for painting, and without regrets left the research job that year, but decided to carry on editing and indexing. Luckily, projects, mostly editing nowadays, are continuing to roll in. So here I am today in 2021, by a series of happy accidents, Manchester to Pinner, freelance editing and indexing.

Throughout my life, I have loved to take part in and follow sport. In my early teens, I joined Ashton Fencing club, and went on to represent my club and university, continuing to fence into my 30s at clubs in London. In my 20s, I fell in love with skiing and have managed to ski almost every year since then in Europe and the USA. Like everyone, I am counting the days to when we can all go safely outside with our friends and play.



*Time to paint and do other things:
Still life with wine.*

Glyn Sutcliffe on living in Halifax



Halifax from the south (photo: Glyn Sutcliffe)

In 1979, with his keenly developed artistic appreciation of architecture, and his compassionate and prescient approach to the environment, the Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman said "Halifax is full of character and hidden beauty". By 2021, it can justifiably be claimed that the character of Halifax has been enhanced and its aesthetic qualities have been progressively and incrementally revealed. While there are many concerns about increasing pollution in the modern world, it can be said, as a factual observation and without boast, that Halifax has moved in the opposite direction from polluted town of industrially-generated smogs, and an air quality injurious to health, to a clean and fresh environment. Extensive stone cleaning was carried out in the 1970s and the smoke-blackened buildings revealed their detailed Victorian decoration after years of it being obscured. Along with the national trend, but with some qualification, Halifax has undergone the tortuous process to change from an industrial economy to one based on retail and services. While public parks are not maintained to the same standard as they once were, there has been much tree planting and foliage growth resulting in a greening of the surrounds.

Although Halifax is the location of Eureka: The National Children's Museum, sited on redeveloped ground and attached to former parts of the classically-fronted railway station, it cannot be denied that Halifax, largely because of its size and position, has always been, and continues to be, provincial. This can be seen both as a weakness and as a strength according to one's loyalties, sense of belonging, or perceived necessary or cultural needs. Halifax may not have a Premiership

football club or a university or be the first destination, even within Yorkshire, for the tourist, but it was the first to establish a building society, manufacture reflecting road studs and establish a Choral Society which has endured for 200 years. In this respect as far as the wider world is concerned, Betjeman's word 'hidden' probably still has application, but with a different emphasis. The rural countryside of Calderdale is always visible from all parts of the built-up areas, and the balance of town and country approaches an ideal. The larger conurbation of Leeds-Bradford may provide the cultural advantages which cities do, but does not offer the uplifting proximity of rural and semi-rural landscape. To the north of Halifax is the Dales National Park and to the south the Peak District. To the west are the many and varied delights of the Calder and Ryburn Valleys stretching away towards the border with the Red Rose County.

I went to school in the Ryburn Valley during the 1960s. I was preceded by the alumnus Albert Hugh Smith (1903–67), who is or will be of interest to indexers, since he became an expert academic on English place names. He lived locally, went on to attend Leeds University, and was also an authority on Old English and Scandinavian languages. A completely different character who attended the school was the apparently fearless John Noakes, who gained fame as a *Blue Peter* presenter on BBC Television. He was also a local product who went far afield in search of adventure, but elected to have his ashes fired skywards from the school's playing fields.

Having previously worked in Berkshire, Lancashire and in the unofficial capital of Yorkshire,

➔ p10

p9 ↻ Ilkley, I am now retired in my home town of Halifax. Local history indexing is my main concern, where abound passing mentions which cannot necessarily be discarded as is classically recommended in general indexing training. My recent indexing of *Every valley shall be exalted: Halifax Choral Society 1818-2018* (D&M Heritage Press, 2019) and *Halifax: From prehistoric times to the present day* (Carnegie Publishing, 2020) has been an instructive privilege in gaining a detailed overview of Halifax history. I have the advantage of not only knowing the author of both these books, John A. Hargreaves, but I also live in close proximity to him for continuing discussion.

Apart from some minor troop manoeuvrings during the Civil War, and some tragic fatalities due to a stray Luftwaffe bomb in World War Two, the townscape of Halifax has largely escaped the direct effects of war, although of course the populace has not. The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, in which served J.B. Priestley and Capt. Sir Tom Moore, was based in the town and went forth in many national conflicts to face enemies in foreign fields. A Regimental monument in the Town centre was dedicated in 2019.

The main historical characteristics of Halifax are the medieval parish church, in recent years upgraded to Minster status; the development of the woollen trade and establishment of the recently refurbished eighteenth-century Piece Hall, where pieces of woollen cloth were traded centrally, before being superseded

by the factory system of the industrial revolution; the preserved Victorian town centre with its 1863 archetypal town hall designed by Sir Charles Barry, architect of the Palace of Westminster; and the remarkable diversity of trades and commerce which grew up, including machine tools, wire manufacture, confectionery making, banking, building societies and insurance. Notable people are the much discussed and recently dramatised personality Anne Lister of Shibden Hall with her partially encoded diaries; novelist Phyllis Bentley, author of *Inheritance*; and the Brontë sisters and their brother Branwell who, though some miles distant in Haworth, had a strong connection with Halifax as a nearby urban centre. Local houses have strong claims to inspiring Emily Brontë's imagination in her uniquely forceful literary classic, *Wuthering Heights*. The moorlands surrounding the Halifax, Calderdale and Keighley areas need to be experienced to fully appreciate both the novel and Halifax alike. At the time of the Brontës, Halifax was a centre of the Chartist movement and industrial unrest. In more recent times, Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath found poetic inspiration and indeed sought a close identity with the Brontës and their Gothic and tragic world. Sylvia Plath's forlorn and lonely grave is to be found in Heptonstall, the hilltop village which corresponds to Haworth in the imagination. The playwright Sally Wainwright, creator of the *Gentleman Jack* TV drama of the life of Anne Lister, has also found success and critical acceptance with her

↻ p11



Halifax Piece Hall at night looking south-east (photo: Glyn Sutcliffe)

p 10 🔄 imaginative work in *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*, both filmed in the scenic Calder Valley. Two recent visits to the Piece Hall by the popular TV programme *The Antiques Road Show* highlighted the preserved Halifax Gibbet blade used as a method of execution in less tolerant times and a forerunner of the French guillotine.

For the bibliophile, Edwards bookbinders and book-sellers were a very prominent presence not only in Halifax, but via their London offices. Somewhat surprisingly, concert performance visits to the town by prominent musicians in the past have included those by Liszt, Paganini and Johann Strauss the elder. It seems startling enough to learn that Mendelssohn dedicated a psalm setting to the Halifax Choral Society, but astonishing to be told that an authenticated score by Mozart of his orchestration of Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* was rediscovered in local archives in 2002. A personality deserving of far greater recognition is that of Sarah Bates (*née* Harrop, 1758–1811), who, although born in Lancashire, rose from a factory worker in Halifax to be one of the foremost divas of her age, progressing to a glittering career in London. Her husband Joah Bates organised the national celebratory concerts for Handel in 1784. Bates had earlier staged the first northern performance of *Messiah* in 1766. This took place in Halifax Parish Church with William Herschel the astronomer as organist.

Bejeman was preceded as a critical visitor by Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens and others. Dickens' verdict was "as horrible a place as I ever saw", so perhaps the Halifax conditions of the time contributed to his descriptions of poverty and hardship. Dickens' father-in-law, George Hogarth, was the first editor of the *Halifax Guardian* newspaper; Dickens married his daughter Catherine in

1836. Both Defoe and the explorer Celia Fiennes were deterred by the steep and difficult approaches to Halifax, but Defoe made many very valuable observations on a wide variety of the town's facets.

The Yorkshire Group of the SI enjoyed a social visit to Halifax on 20 June 2018 and a report of the joyous occasion appeared in *Sidelights*. The group was clearly inspired to enterprisingly initiate and pioneer such things as peer review exercises by remote means in response to the lockdown restrictions and to involve other SI Groups successfully in a gregarious Yorkshire fashion.

In terms of current individual achievement in the face of adversity, no account of Halifax is complete without spotlighting the achievements of Halifax's paralympian and world record holder Hannah Cockroft, who over the past decade has dominated her events at the highest level. Away from the track, Hannah has also excelled as an ambassador for sport, raising morale and hope, and spreading cheerfulness at local events.

I am now looking forward to indexing a forthcoming biography of the Rt Hon. John Henry Whitley, who was MP for Halifax 1900–28 and a well-respected holder of the office of Speaker of the House of Commons 1921–28. He was unique in declining a peerage, since the elevation was and is the traditional progression for retiring Speakers. This was consistent with his opinion that the House of Lords should be abolished. He went on to become Chairman of the BBC from 1930 to 1935. His nonconformity, dedicated sense of public service, independence of thought and provincial roots in many ways reflected the Halifax of his day and possibly relates to the Halifax of the present day. Such thoughts can only be confirmed or dispelled by visiting the town in the post-pandemic era.

see also . . .

Some indexers are so well embedded that they enjoy a continuous flow of work, perhaps most commonly from a small repertoire of regular clients and/or in a specialised area of subject matter. Others are inured to a more fitful rate of offers and enquiries. This writer counts himself among those for whom "feast or famine" most accurately describes the flow. It's been famine since before Christmas, but that has not amounted to the disaster it would to those for whom indexing is the only iron in the fire. He has been getting on with other things.

For several weeks, your correspondent's head has been in the London of the early 1970s. There will always be a demand for period drama – in television, theatre and cinema – and recreating a time that remains in living memory has a particular appeal. So the project in question – wholly speculative rather than commissioned, I should make clear – features a good deal of revisiting the writer's youth, a bitter-sweet exercise in all conscience.

Memory of course is an unreliable exercise, given to playing tricks and misreporting, to casting a rosy glow or

manufacturing an imagined degree of drama and conflict. Our house ought to offer considerable assistance in researching for accuracy. Both my partner and I are congenital hoarders. Whatever television programmes you might have seen on the supposedly fascinating question of people's inability to shed, to dispose and to rationalise, you ain't seen nothing. My partner is certainly a world class hoarder, but I hoard not for the nation or the world but for the history of the universe. Virtually everything that enters this house and is inedible or not the packaging of said comestibles is never permitted by me to leave again. Printed matter is trapped forever, even newspapers (which I've always intended to fillet for cuttings). There are magazines, journals, periodicals, pamphlets, theatre programmes, promotion material and documents – never mind the even more sacred matter of books – going back nearly 60 years within the confines of the home. Being a spacious and labyrinthine property dating from the 1630s and added to in each century since, with vast attic space and outbuildings some of which are weatherproof (and not burdened with small and

🔄 p12

p11 ☞ inquisitive children), it lends itself to housing an ever sprawling collection.

As someone who for decades wrote extensively about and sometimes worked within the world of television, I began recording stuff off air as soon as there was such a beast as a home recording machine. In my childhood, I had longed for the ability to have movies at home that I could project at my leisure. Suddenly there was the domestic video cassette recorder.

As is so often the case with new devices, there were initially two rival systems before one prevailed – VHS won and Betamax perished. Happily, I had gone with VHS. For a few years, every other retail outlet sold videotapes, blank (which I sought) and prerecorded (which I found much less need for). As well as programmes, I could snag movies off-air and build a film collection for no more than the price of the blank tapes. To this end, I made a list of the one hundred movies I would seek to collect. That was in the late '70s. By the time it became impossible any longer to record off-air – four or five years ago – my collection of taped movies numbered considerably in excess of 5,000.

So there is plenty of material here to inform in minute detail a recreation of late January 1973, which is when my project begins. And as do most period dramas, this one sets fictional people against a real world, so the real world needs to be authentic and convincing. Copies of *Time Out* and *Radio Times* for the weeks that I have been recreating are certainly in this house. But where are they? That's the trouble with having a mass of physical material. It cannot be stored like lists. As well as upon shelves, videotapes and issues of publications have been piled into boxes, the boxes moved from room to room according to passing needs, and pretty soon nothing is to hand. And then there are masses of CDs and audiotapes and LPs and indeed 45s and 78s, both



A corner of the library

of us loving music of every kind (we have a world-class collection of original cast albums of vintage Broadway musicals). What I need – yes, gentle reader, you're way ahead of me – is an *index*. Or at any rate, the collection requires an inventory, a compendium, a pandect if not a map of the house. Knowing that the answer to a query is *somewhere in the building* generates a considerable degree of frustration.

Some of you will have diagnosed that the matter could have been resolved years ago by a mass clear-out. But then of course the potential research material would have been lost to some landfill. If one could just imprint into one's brain all the knowledge contained on this tape and these pages. Sadly, capacity is limited and as age takes its toll the remembered stuff begins to disintegrate.

In any case, who among us does not own, for example, more books than can possibly be read in the time left to us? Non-book-minded visitors are apt to gaze at one's groaning shelves and ask that dumbest of questions: "have you read all these books?" Of course not. What would be the point in foregoing that delightful question: "oooo now, what shall I read next?" As well ask if you've eaten everything in the kitchen?

I've sometimes been challenged by a visitor goggling at the rows of videotapes: "when are you going to watch all these tapes?" "Tomorrow" is the pat reply. But tomorrow never comes. Before the time does come when I am no longer capable of dealing with it, I will have to make some provision for the thousands of videotapes and magazines and newspapers and books. O Lord, make me be rational and rationalise – but not yet.



A few cassettes

Making Tax Digital

From April 2023, all self-employed people with turnover of £10,000 or more per annum will have to submit their income and expenses information to HMRC digitally, using HMRC-approved third party software. (Thanks to **Moira Greenhalgh** for bringing this to my attention.) This is part of the ongoing 'Making Tax Digital' (MTD) initiative that the government is rolling out. MTD has already come into force for VAT returns (for businesses over the £85,000 VAT threshold) and is now being extended to Income Tax.

How will this affect indexers? Unless your turnover is regularly under £10,000, it will almost certainly require you to make some changes to your present record-keeping practices. If you have an accountant or agent who deals with your tax affairs, they will no doubt continue to do so, but they might need you to provide them with information more often (figures will need to be sent to HMRC every quarter, not just once a year). They may also want to encourage you to use software if you are at all able.

If you manage your tax affairs yourself, as many of us do, you will want to start keeping digital records (if you don't already) and/or checking out what software you will need. 'Digital records' can be as simple as keeping a spreadsheet. But ultimately you will need HMRC-approved MTD-compliant software to transfer your income and expenditure totals to HMRC.

The government has [a list of approved software providers](#) on its website. As this is still a new development, the list is small at present, but is being updated as more software becomes available. Many software manufacturers have already developed VAT software that is MTD-compliant and are now working on their Income Tax versions. As far as I can see, there are basically two types of software: (1) complete packages that you use both to keep your records and submit data

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website interface. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation links for Departments, Worldwide, How government works, Get involved, Consultations, Statistics, and News and communications. Below that, there are links for Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Brexit. The main content area is titled 'Guidance' and 'Follow the rules for Making Tax Digital for Income Tax'. It includes a sub-heading: 'Find out about keeping digital records, signing up and using software to send income and expenses updates.' Below this, there's a metadata section: 'From: HM Revenue & Customs', 'Published: 19 March 2020', and 'Last updated: 14 December 2020, see all updates'. There are also sections for 'Contents' and 'Related content' with various links.

to HMRC, and (2) 'bridging' software which will extract the relevant totals from your own spreadsheet and submit this to HMRC. Some of the currently available software packages have free trial versions; it's less clear whether you need a paid-for version to be able to submit data to HMRC. The cost of such software is a tax-deductible expense.

HMRC are currently inviting people to sign up voluntarily to a pilot ahead of the 2023 start date. This could be a valuable opportunity to help shape the final system, ensuring it is designed for a wide range of individuals and their circumstances – both in terms of their finances and their technical abilities/limitations. At present the eligibility for participating is quite narrow – for example, you cannot sign up if you need to report income from sources other than as a sole trader or landlord – but the criteria are gradually widening, as HMRC adds components to the system, and (presumably) in response

to user feedback.

I'm not signed up to the pilot, but I have signed up with two of the software providers listed at HMRC – Apari and Rhino – to try out their wares. It took me most of a day to get started with them (they're not quite as user-friendly as their makers would like to believe) but eventually I got to grips with them. My initial impressions are that Apari could be useful as 'bridging' software, whereas Rhino might be preferable if I wanted to do all my record-keeping within the software. For example, Rhino allows significant flexibility for creating types of expenses, so it was easy to create one to deal with "use of home as office" where only a proportion of the bill is work-related. Apari enabled me to upload my own data from an Excel spreadsheet, saved as a .csv file. (Top tips if you try this: make sure the spreadsheet contains figures, not formulae, and use 'General' for format rather than 'Currency').

p13 ☞ If you wish, you can (in theory – I haven't tried this) connect the software to your bank account and upload data directly from your bank statement to the software, ready for you to edit/allocate as appropriate. This could be useful if you have a dedicated business account and/or you have no qualms about privacy and security. At the other end of the scale, you can input data manually, one transaction

at a time. (I did try uploading a .csv file downloaded from my online banking account, but it was not satisfactory. It may work fine with other banks).

Mandatory MTD is still two years off, but the start of a new tax year is an ideal time to start thinking about the implications and trying out new methods and software. If you already use record-keeping software, check with the provider what their plans

for MTD-compliance are. It would be good to hear from others – either in *Sidelights* or on the SI forums – of experience with the various software available so we can all feel well-equipped to face this challenge. Visit gov.uk for information and advice.

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CINDEX™ – Spaces: a little something about nothing

They are easy to see when they are there (or missing) in text, but harder to know if they are present in dialog setting boxes you use when formatting the index for export, or reviewing the index in FULL FORMAT VIEW. Here are some tips to ensure you can 'see' them.

Spaces for formatting

The most common punctuation automatically inserted by Cindex between the end of a heading and the start of its page references is 'comma space' as in:

Tuckaleechee Cove, 28-30, 36

Some clients may request two spaces, as in:

Tuckaleechee Cove 28-30, 36

The 'two spaces' setting would replace the default 'comma space' settings at DOCUMENT MENU//PAGE REFERENCE//PUNCTUATION – in both the BEFORE SINGLE and BEFORE MULTIPLE boxes. (Unless you are a legal indexer, you may not understand why we have these two settings. Legal indexes often have complicated citations, long character strings involving both Arabic and Roman numerals as well as punctuation and letters. Differing lead punctuation alerts the user to the presence of more than a single reference). To all intents and purposes, it then looks as if the boxes are blank. To check the setting, simply either single click in the box and note the position of the cursor or double click in the box and

the spaces will be highlighted. These techniques also work if you have the default 'comma space' setting.

Other places where you may have added a space setting are from the DOCUMENT MENU – CROSS-REFERENCES and REFERENCE SYNTAX. To check that they indeed contain typed spaces and are not simply blank, use the technique described above.

Unintentional extra space in entry text

Lastly, to prevent an extra space creeping into the text of your entries, do make sure that the setting REMOVE EXTRA SPACES under PREFERENCES //EDITING TAB//GENERAL is checked.

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Local Groups

East Anglia

The East Anglian Group began 2021 with a Zoom meeting in January where we welcomed two new members to the group. After we had all introduced ourselves and given updates on our recent experiences in the world of indexing, we discussed ideas for meetings (either online or otherwise) for the rest of the year.

We prefer to meet face to face if we can (and Ickworth House is still an attractive option, weather permitting), but as long as this is not feasible, we will continue with Zoom meetings. The most popular topics for future meetings this year ☞ **p15**



Ickworth House

p14 ☞ are to consider how we relate to a text, approaches to creating subheadings, subject-specialisms and a peer review. With such a range of things to discuss, we all look forward to some stimulating meetings over the next year.

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London

Eight of us met for a Zoom chat in February and we were pleased to welcome a new student member, **Jeremy Crumplin**. We shared memories of our last in-person meeting almost exactly a year previously. For almost all of us, the last time we had been on a train, or indeed any public transport, was for our group visit to the Dickens museum in Holborn in early March. Several of us had received at least one vaccination, which gives us some hope that we will be able to meet up as a group sometime before the end of the year.

Pronouns and gender had been in the news, and we discussed how strange it feels that some foreign languages assign gender to nouns, not always logically. Looking for examples after the meeting, I found that in German a fork is feminine, a spoon masculine and a knife neutral – *die Gabel* (the fork), *der Löffel* (the spoon) and *das Messer* (the knife).

Life has been fairly quiet for most of us recently, with exciting experiences including visiting a railway bridge to look at trains, watching sport on television and dealing with flat batteries. Work flow seemed to be holding up well, despite rumours of slowdowns in some US university presses. A few of us had indexed the term "Covid-19" or "coronavirus pandemic", though as yet we hadn't experienced any major coverage. It had been mentioned briefly in texts covering such random topics as tourism, supply chains and the correspondence of influential women.

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Scotland

The Scottish local group met virtually via Zoom on Thursday 7 January

for a New Year catch-up and chat. It was an informal drop-in with no agenda, and it was lovely that so many members attended – established indexers, new indexers and students alike.

The conversation centred around life and work as ever, with a particular focus on communication amongst indexers and how best to manage that, the frequency of meet-ups, and avoiding isolation. The latter is obviously particularly pertinent at the moment, but is always a consideration for those of us who work from home, often on solitary projects. We also talked about admin, invoicing and software.

With that in mind and for as long as needs be, there will be a quarterly online meeting over Zoom. Once we are able to meet in person again, we will go back to two meetings a year, but these will be interspersed with Zoom catch-ups. This also allows anyone less able to travel to join in if they please.

The next meeting will be Wednesday 21 April at 11:00. If you are an SI member based in (or able to visit) Scotland and not already on the mailing list for Scottish local group events, please email and request to be added.

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Sussex

Eight members of the SI Sussex group met by Zoom on Tuesday 23 March. We discussed how individual indexers can demonstrate the value of their work, especially in relation to clients. Some members included a short outline of indexing decisions made when returning indexes to clients, especially where the reasons for decisions might be unclear to the non-expert client. Negotiations on inclusions, especially around names, could be good opportunities to show how an indexer's expertise can make an index more useful. One of us had had some success in persuading a client to use embedded indexing; sharing our technological expertise, which is usually obscure to most clients, can be a

really helpful way of showing the value of working with a professional indexer. Advising on index format – such as whether to have separate name and subject index – was another good way of demonstrating value.

We also discussed taking the first steps in embedded indexing. Obviously the SI workshops on this topic were suggested as the first point of call, and had been useful for Sussex members who were now working on embedded indexing. We further discussed renegotiating fees and deadlines once a project had started. Most of us had successfully renegotiated deadlines, and there was often some slippage built into the publishing schedule in any case, but there was a general view that fees were harder to renegotiate and most of us had not tried. However, there was no reason not to ask if the job had proved significantly more time-consuming than could have reasonably be expected after reviewing a sample of the text.

Members were keen on the idea of an online SI conference, and on continuing to have Zoom meetings in the future, hopefully in combination with some in-person events. Zoom allowed for more frequent meetings and would also be useful for sharing technical skills or running workshops. However, we agreed that we would hope to meet in person in the summer, perhaps at a picnic, if restrictions allow.

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Three Choirs

The Three Choirs group continues to Zoom monthly with a fairly regular group of ten to twelve of us. Meetings usually last about an hour. Sometimes we have indexing issues to discuss, but in general there isn't an agenda. At our last meeting, we decided to make a date for our first 'live' meeting at Westonbirt Arboretum. Of course, as we all know, it is possible this could change, but I think we are all happy to have this possibility in the diary. The date we chose is 22 September at ☞ **p16**

p15 ➔ the usual time of 10:30 am. Who knows? It just might happen.

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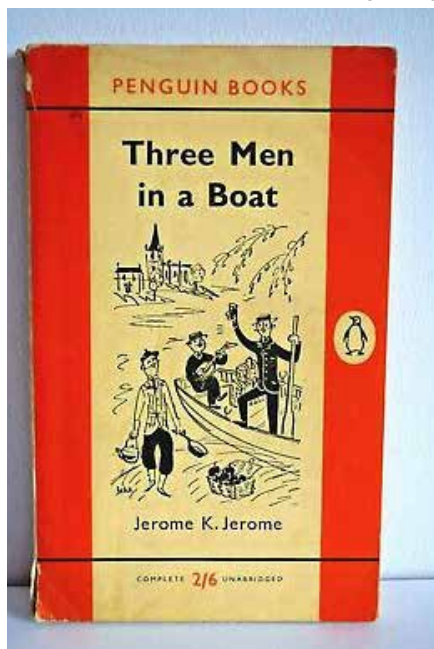
Wessex

Seven members of the Wessex Group (to be precise, six members of Wessex plus one welcome addition from East Anglia) took part in a Zoom meeting towards the end of March. We are a small group so it is often difficult to arrange meetings with enough participants; however, this time (thanks to **Jan Worrall**), we managed it. The participants included several students and we discussed some issues they raised, such as useful books and how to approach an indexing job. Indexing reference books are incredibly expensive to buy, so there was a discussion of whether used books could be sold through the SI website. We also discussed proof-reading one's own work and it was suggested that some hints could be posted to the Student Forum. We chatted for around an hour and agreed to arrange another Zoom for mid-June with a view to arranging an in-person meeting when permitted. We would like to extend our Zoom invitation to anyone from other local groups who would like to meet up.

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Yorkshire

At the time of writing, I am skipping a crew of around a dozen or so indexers and student indexers in a peer review exercise based on three chapters of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*. Taking things at a gentle pace



on Sideline, so far we have discussed fiction/comedy indexes, breaking indexing 'rules' and other comic devices that might be employed in indexes, indexing software, and how we indexed the narrator. We even managed to fit in an Easter egg hunt. For many of us, indexing both fiction and humour has been quite a departure from

our usual practice, and for all of us the text has provided some timely escapism.

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