

Slidelights

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NEWSLETTER OF THE
society of
indexers
information from A to Z

Editorial

"A week is a long time in politics" was arguably the truest thing Harold Wilson ever said. Some would propose that it was the *only* true thing he ever said, others that it wasn't even his original observation. But insofar as it is true, three months is indeed a veritable aeon. When the last issue of *Slidelights* was posted in October, Liz Truss (sorry ... Liz who?) had just become prime minister and, while we all knew that she had a daunting mountain to climb, no one was suggesting (at least publicly) that she might never get out of the foothills, but rather be gone in 50 days. No premiership had ever been remotely as brief.

Time is a fickle and fugitive concept. As one grows older, one's sense of it can change markedly. For some it whistles by; for others it hangs heavy. John Mortimer once described his latter days seeming so speeded up that he fully expected, when rising in the morning, to meet himself coming back to bed. On the other hand, it's a common enough experience in this season, looking back on the just completed year, to feel that one has frittered the time away. Malcolm Muggeridge entitled his uncompleted autobiography *Chronicles*



The church at Lamothe-Goas, Gers, France, pictured by Ruth Martin. See p 12.

of Wasted Time. It prompts the question: is time wasted if it is

chronicled? Alan Bennett's diaries, collected in book form and published annually in the new year issue of the *London Review of Books*, might be deemed chronicles of wasted time. They largely record gentle walks and musings on the past. Bennett hardly ever touches on his work as a playwright and screenwriter or the processes by which his plays and scripts are put into production. That, presumably, is his productive time. Maybe it seems to him to zip by in a flash and the wanderings and reminiscences are what expand to fill the mental space.

Time hanging heavy may well be an expression of concerns other than time itself [see also *see also ...*, p 14]. But something about the passing of time that seems to condition everyone who lives into old age is a telescoping of memory. So, far distant events start to re-emerge in one's consciousness as vivid as if they happened yesterday, whereas just as universal is the inability to recall what one had for breakfast or why one just came upstairs. Meanwhile, all of us should be so lucky as to experience with any degree of frequency those moments so transporting that, as they say, time seems to stand still.

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

April 2023 *Sidelights*

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Presidential Musings

I've been reading, for review, a big new academic book by Jonathan Duke-Evans called *An English Tradition? The History and Significance of Fair Play*. I started reading it with a certain amount of scepticism. Talk about a vague subject, I thought. I mean, I know every politician spouting a laundry-list of supposed British values includes "fair play" along with other such as warm beer, an honest day's work, sniffing the seats of unattended bicycles and so on. But how are you to assess the historical significance of a bromide – let alone ask whether that abstract concept has a meaningful analogue in real-world action? How are you going to get your teeth into such a wisp of smoke?

Funnily enough, though, the author hits on a method that gets him a lot further than I ever imagined it would: he counts. A large section at the front of the book goes through the complete corpus of printed work from medieval times right up into the twentieth century looking for the phrase – the early-modernist's equivalent of a Google Ngram search. He picks out specially illustrative or interesting examples, and he also weighs the number of mentions. And, blow me: it really does seem to have been a catchphrase that takes on a special weight in all sorts of domains, that moves from sport into law and politics, that shifts across class and that changes its force over time.

This strikes me as, if not exactly an indexing technique, an index-adjacent technique. A whole argument made, if you like, from a forest of passing mentions. For the record, none other than Daniel Defoe made the claim about our national character first and boldest: "while the Dutch mangle one another with Knives, the Scotch Highlanders knock one another's Brains out with Pole-Axes, the Irish stab with their skeins, and Spaniards with their Daggers; the English men fairly box it out, and in this way of fighting the rabble stand by to see fair Play, as they call it ..." Anyway, fair play to Mr Duke-Evans. I dare say he'd make a good indexer.

Sam Leith

Letters to the Editor

Both the editorial and the President's 'Musings' in the October issue of *Sidelights* ask the question "What has this got to do with indexing?". The real answer in both cases is, absolutely nothing. The editorial is inappropriately political and the President's remarks are misguided particularly with respect to indexing the Queen Consort. The remainder of the issue is of the usual high standard with innovative features.

Glyn Sutcliffe

Christine Shuttleworth responds:

I have no quarrel with the editorial – surely politics and current affairs are very much within the province of indexers. We don't live in ivory towers after all, and the recent political developments are of particular historical significance. Incidentally, I have just for the first time created an index entry for 'Charles, Prince of Wales (later King Charles III)'. As for **Sam Leith's** comments on indexing the Queen Consort, I can only presume he was joking when he wrote "she'll end up as 'Queen Camilla the King Mother' too at some point". She is of course not Prince William's mother but his stepmother.

Notes from the Editor

As we go to press, the death is announced of **John Vickers** at 95. We plan to carry a obituary in the April Issue.

To our mortification, the name of the author of the 'My Neck of the Woods' column in the October issue was misreported. To **Pauline Carroll**, we extend our heartfelt apologies. The website has been amended.

Society News

Executive Board Report

The Executive Board last met on 10 October 2022. They discussed a series of presentations to be made by EB members to external organisations during the first quarter of 2023; **Rachel Gee** will deliver an online talk about the training course to AFEPI Ireland (Association of Freelance Editors, Proofreaders and Indexers of Ireland), **Ruth Ellis** will give an online talk about indexing children's books at Penguin Random House, and **Tanya Izzard** and **Dennis Duncan** will be speak at the Biographers' Club, Tanya focusing

on present-day indexing, and Dennis discussing *Index: A History of the*.

Rachel Gee reported on the successful launch of the new training website. It was made available to students on 3 October, and SI's contract with the previous supplier has ended.

Marketing activities are ongoing. SI will be taking out an advertisement for the SI training course in the Archives and Records Association digital magazine ARC. The Marketing Working Group has met and agreed working practices and next steps.

EB also discussed preparations

for the AGM, including a proposal to raise the annual membership subscription. This was approved at the AGM on 12 December. EB also finalised the recommended indexing rates for 2023. These have been updated on the website.

The minutes are available in full on the SI website. The next meeting of EB is scheduled for 16 January.

Lyndsay Marshall, Minutes Secretary
LM.indexing@gmail.com

The Indexer

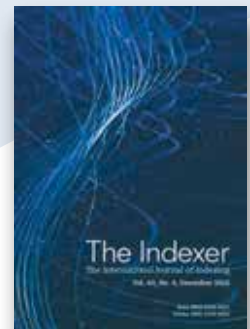
The International Journal of Indexing

Articles in Volume 40, Issue 4 (December 2022) include:

Metatopic musings, Part 1. UK and US practices compared
Melanie Gee

Indexing the Joseph Smith Papers: a story of client-indexer collaboration
Kate Mertes

Indexing The Indexer, Part 3. A first look at the survey results
Max McMaster and Ann Kingdom



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.



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CONGRATULATIONS TO

Fellow of the Society – FSocInd – Mel Gee, Sheffield

The Moys-Crane Award

Formerly the Betty Moys Prize, this is awarded to the highest achieving student who completed the SI Training Course in the previous calendar year. At the Berlin Conference in October, the Moys-Crane Award for 2021 was presented to **Valeria Padalino** [see p 9]. Congratulations to Valeria, and best of luck for a successful indexing future.

Kim Birchall

Behind the Chair

Happy new year. After the AGM in December, we held a short Society Matters discussion about SI Local Groups. So I thought I ought to put together some background information and gather some thoughts to show where we are and what we might do in future with the groups. I am also going to ask some questions, which might help you think about your own engagement with SI Local Groups. And then there's an anecdote about what happens when you don't know the indexer in the room.

We have 12 groups on the UK mainland plus Ireland and an overseas group, so 14 in total, listed [here](#). The groups are named on a territorial basis, but anyone is free to join in with any group if they see an activity they would like to take part in. Local Groups are open to all members at all stages of their career, whether student or experienced indexer. When new members join, they are subscribed by the Admin Officer to the forum for the appropriate group local to them, but again they can subscribe to any and all of the forums. You can see [all the forums](#) you can subscribe to

by logging in to the website.

Forums should be the main method of communication between group members, but I am sure many of you are also getting emails from your group leader or other group members. Your group leader should also have your email address, and you can check with them to make sure. To subscribe to another group you click on the 'subscribe' on the right hand side of the group header *[as seen below]*.

Which local group forum/s are you subscribed to?


Are there any more you could subscribe to?

Local groups are intended as a way for indexers to meet each other and to form social and professional connections. We spend most of our working lives on our own, and occasionally we need a bit of help with our work. There's a wealth of experience in the local groups. Sometimes we can draw support from people we have met person-

ally, either in person or online, more easily than from a SI forum or another, international forum.

Would I ask a question on my local forum or email group before asking a wider audience?

Social meetings have long been an important part of local group activities. Before the pandemic, some groups arranged visits to sites of local interest, such as galleries and museums, or to places related to book production such as publishers, self-publisher production facilities and libraries. Others hold social meetings in pubs, cafes and restaurants. Discussions can be subject-related, such as peer-reviews, or just social. Reports are usually submitted to *Sidelights*, along with suitable photographs.

Some subject-related activities, such as [workshops](#) or peer-review, can count towards Fellowship, and should in any case be recorded in a member's own Continual Professional Development (CPD)  [p5](#)

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Students | CPD | Groups | Society Business | Resources | Account

Local Group: Northwest

Home > Forums > Local Group: Northwest



p4 ↻ record. A Personal Development Plan can highlight where local group activities can be incorporated into [professional development](#).

What kind of meetings has my local group held, both before the pandemic and since? (Check the *Sidelights* archive for details.)

Group Leaders play an important role in managing the groups' activities. However, several groups do not currently have a formal group leader. **Pam Scholefield** is the current Groups Co-Ordinator and she would be happy to help anyone become a group leader. Support is available to get to grips with using the SI Zoom account: [contact Paul](#).

Who is my group leader? If there isn't one, could I become it?

Some local groups have a forward plan so that members can plan several months ahead; others work on a more ad hoc basis and agree a time and date when people likely to attend are available.

Most group meetings in person are held in the middle of the day, allowing people to travel to the venue on the day. However, this might not be suitable for some members because of other commitments around work and family. In the summer months, late afternoon or evening meetings might be more appropriate for some groups to meet in person. Later meetings by Zoom might also be appropriate for some groups all year round if they find it difficult to meet in person. Your group leader could explore different times of day for different types of meeting.

When would be the best time of day for me to join a group meeting? Could I take part in meetings at other times of day?

Meetings with the local groups of the Chartered Institute of Editing

and Proofreading (CIEP) are also a possibility. They are a larger society and consequently have more groups. SI members report that while they don't necessarily provide work opportunities, they are another opportunity to share experience of working as a freelancer in publishing. As with SI groups, members can contact any of the CIEP local group leaders to find out what their group is planning and join the meetings – see their [website](#) for more information.

Which is the CIEP local group nearest to me? Who is their group leader?

I believe there is still value for members in meeting other indexers face-to-face, and if that's not possible, through the various electronic methods available to us. I know some people struggle with the technology sometimes, through sluggish internet connections or other difficulties, so it is perhaps more important for them to be able to meet up with people. But we all need a little help sometimes in the form of an invitation to an event or a question about our availability. I'd like to see more group activity over the next year or so, and **Paul Machen** is there to help with the

calendar, Zoom, contacts etc. So just ask, don't be shy.

Finally, if you don't meet indexers in the flesh, how do you know when you might be in a room with one? At the London Group Christmas lunch in December I was talking about going on afterwards to meet my son. He's a student at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, which is in Greenwich. One of the members at the lunch lives in that area and attends some of the concerts and recitals put on by the music students. We were discussing the lack of suitable venues for the performances when she mentioned having been to St Giles in the Fields church (round the back of Centre Point, off Tottenham Court Road, events organised by [Music-at-Hill](#)) for a concert in the summer, and there was a girl trumpeter. Yes, she'd been to my son's Brass Quintet Jubilee concert ([Alpine Brass](#)), we'd been in the same room at the same time and because we'd never met before, I didn't know her. So the moral of the story, is don't be like me and get caught out with not knowing the indexer in the room, meet some new people in 2023.

Nicola King
chair@indexers.org.uk



On becoming the Training Course Coordinator

Let me introduce myself ...

After ten years of involvement with the SI Training Course and a couple of years of deputising, I took over from **Jan Worrall** as the Training Course Coordinator in October 2021. I've been an indexer since 2008, and I mix it up with the occasional copy-editing or proofreading job to keep my work varied. My specialist subject is linguistics, but like many indexers I've worked on books in every subject imaginable. As a result, I can often be found in pub quizzes uttering the words, "Oh, I did a book on this once ... but I can't remember the details", and having no more idea than anyone else.

Having seen the progression of the Training Course from the third

to the current fifth edition, I feel that it now has the ideal balance of teaching and supporting. I enjoy seeing the progress that students make, and I have a dedicated team of assignment tutors, test paper markers and course advisors who work hard, alongside **Paul Machen** in the office, to bring out the best in trainee indexers throughout the accreditation process, while maintaining a high professional standard.

In my spare time, I'm a bit of a parkrun obsessive, grabbing every opportunity to try out a 'tourist' parkrun whenever I'm away from home. The Berlin Conference in October was my first chance to participate in a parkrun outside the UK. Much of my time is currently spent renovating a house in the

north of Scotland that I bought with my husband last spring.



Kim Birchall
training@indexers.org.uk

Website and Social Media

Looking at the website statistics for 2022, 46% of users come via direct access (i.e. they either have the site already bookmarked, or they typed the address in). These are most likely to be existing members or those in related professions who already know about us. 44% arrive via a search result. The remaining 10% of users come via a link on another website (e.g. from associated sites such as ciep.uk or members' own sites).

Table 1 shows the first page that visitors arrive on before going elsewhere on the site. A new entry to this list is the My Course Page which is the page where students access the training course. Since this was only launched in the last quarter, its hits for this year are low, but it will move up the ranking for the coming year.

| <i>Page</i> | <i>% Share</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Home page | 89.79 |
| Forums | 1.66 |
| Log In | 1.57 |
| Directory of Professional Indexers | 0.69 |
| Indexing fees | 0.51 |
| Training Course overview/features | 0.42 |
| A career in indexing | 0.38 |
| My Course Page | 0.10 |

What is of more interest to us is where users go after the first page they land on. Table 2 shows which pages get the most views in total.

| <i>Page</i> | <i>% Share</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Forums | 15.57 |
| Directory of Professional Indexers | 12.34 |
| Home page | 10.62 |
| Log In | 5.92 |
| Training Course overview/features | 3.05 |
| Indexing Fees | 1.86 |
| My Course Page | 1.27 |
| A career in indexing | 1.25 |

The most popular topic on the forums was the 'Over-Indexers Anonymous' peer review.

Ruth Ellis
ruth@indexellis.com

Beverly Winkler attended at the venue . . .

The first time that I visited Berlin it was two cities. Although I am glad that Berlin is once again one, I have to admit that, as a visitor, I preferred it when it was two. Today's Berlin does not have the atmosphere I experienced when I was last there. I will never forget going through Checkpoint Charlie into East Berlin. I was rather taken aback to be surrounded by bombed-out buildings nearly forty years after the end of the war. It had an eerie atmosphere and I felt like an actor in a 1960s Cold War film. On my return visit for the conference (which took place in what was once East Berlin), there was no sign of the bombed-out buildings and the apartment blocks (including the one where I stayed) had all been renovated. It was very pleasant to walk around but I could never dislodge the image of the old East Berlin from my mind.


On the eve of the conference, many participants met up in a very

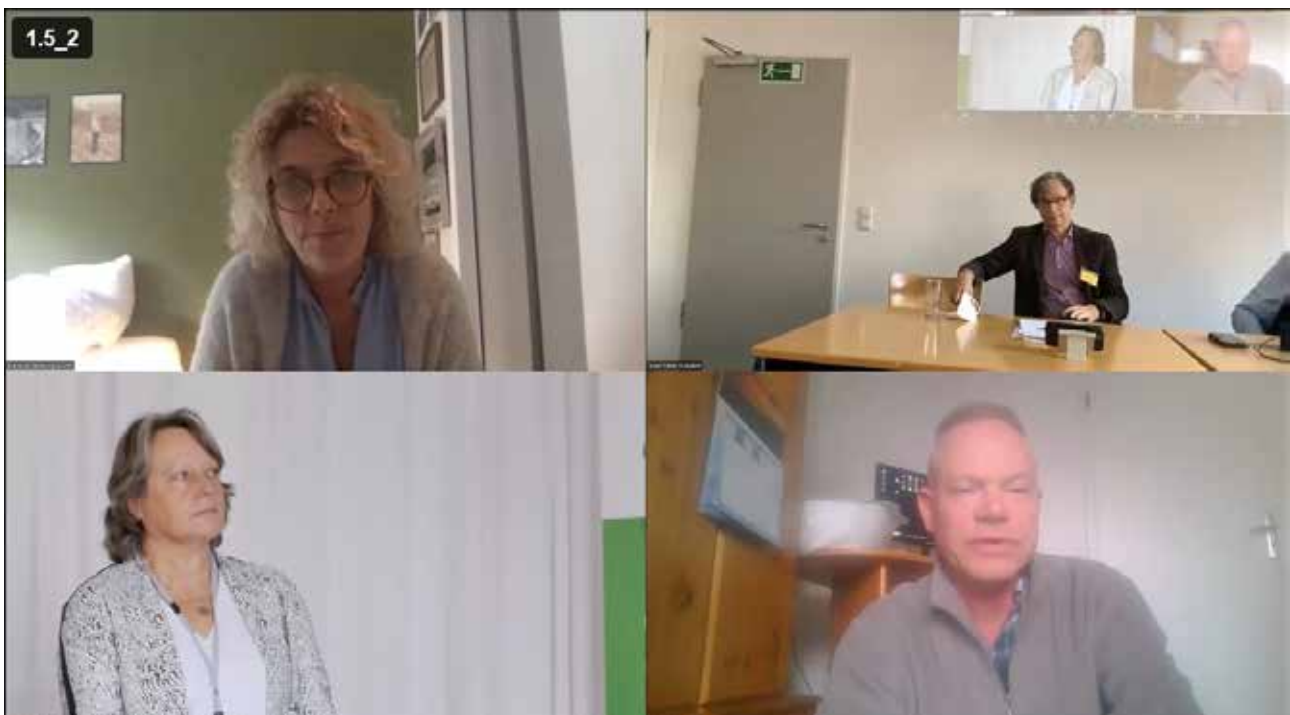
relaxed atmosphere at Brew Dog Berlin for pizza and beer. It was great to see so many people from countries other than the UK, but SI was well represented.

The conference took place in the congenial surroundings of the WeiberWirtschaft, located in the centre of Berlin, with many restaurants and places to stay nearby. On the first day, after we had chosen something from the lunch menu and been welcomed by the conference committee, **Monika Hagedorn-Saupe**, the president of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Information and Wissen (DGI), gave the opening address.

Then it was the turn of the first speaker of the day, **Sam Leith** via Zoom. Sam spoke about developments in publishing from the demise of the Net Book Agreement, leading to supermarkets becoming booksellers and the effect on small bookshops. Then he discussed the way the arrival of Amazon changed

the market, and highlighted how its purchase of AbeBooks actually made it easier to find rare books. The advent of e-books did not result in the death of the physical book, but rather highlighted its advantages. Social media was shown to be a good means of promoting books.

Next up was a presentation on Indexing *The Indexer* given by **Ann Kingdom** in Berlin and **Mary Coe** and **Max McMaster** online from Australia. Ann talked about the history of indexing the journal and the failure to agree on an indexing policy, which has left the subject index inconsistent and out of date. Mary and Max discussed the results of a survey to ascertain how users search for information in *The Indexer*. Many readers used the indexes available on *The Indexer* website: title, author, subject, centrepieces and contents by category. Others searched the Liverpool University Press website. There was no consensus on what 



Discussion session after the first two keynote presentations, demonstrating the hybrid nature of the event. Dr Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (TOP LEFT) speaking from her home in The Netherlands due to a recent back injury; Professor Urs Stäheli (TOP RIGHT) at the conference venue in Berlin; Caroline Diepeveen (BOTTOM LEFT), chairing the session in Berlin, and Jochen Fassbender (BOTTOM RIGHT) participating online from Bremen. Berlin pics by Ann Kingdom.

p7 ➡ to do about the subject index.

Some people thought that it should be brought up to date, others that it was best to start from scratch. Or perhaps the subject index should be removed? Or should all the indexes be removed, leaving just the Liverpool University Press search site facility? The debate continues.

After a well-earned coffee/tea break and a chance to chat with the other participants, we returned to hear **Urs Stäheli's** in-person talk entitled 'What's in an index? Cultural and sociological perspectives'. Urs spoke about our fascination with lists and their flexibility, as it is easy to add and/or remove items and reorder them as necessary. He then discussed how indexes can be seen as a particular type of list, elaborating on how entities of a list (i.e. index entries) are produced. Urs thought that analysing the knowledge work of indexers may provide a privileged perspective for answering the question of how the world becomes listable.

Kiene Brillenburg Wurth then talked to us online from the Netherlands on 'Tabularity and emptiness – who/what reads in the digital age?'. Kiene explained that tabularity is how we access books through the table of contents, margin summaries, headers, footers and, of course, the index. She spoke about the concept of reader activism, of which indexing is a part as it is a way of entering the book wherever you want. Kiene then considered if reader activism could become machine activity. Could coding replace writing? Poems have been generated by artificial intelligence. Could machines teach us?

After a long morning of very varied sessions, leaving us with much to think about, we were definitely ready for lunch. We split up into two groups to go to two local restaurants. Those of us who chose the Vietnamese had a longer than expected wait as the staff initially could only identify the choices on the menu by



Glenda Browne from ANZSI and Walter Greulich from DNI. Covid precautions are in evidence (Glenda had a cold and wore a mask almost all the time).

their number, and none of us had a clue as to the number of the dish we had picked. Eventually a menu was produced and we all got something, although not necessarily the dish we had initially chosen.

The first presentation in the afternoon came from **Walter Greulich** in Berlin on 'Embedded indexing with Word'. Walter showed how index entries can be created and edited in Word. He focused on the advanced methods, hidden in Word's huge range of functions, which can be used to compile an embedded index.

Another in-person technical presentation followed from **Johannes** and **Katharina Munk** entitled 'Indexing as content enrichment and its potential for intelligent information services'. Katharina spoke about how useful Index Manager is for creating embedded index tags efficiently and quickly, even in large amounts of text. In the future, it will become possible to automatically extract relevant index terms and text passages with innovative functions based on automatic language processing. This will open up new tasks and fields of work for indexers.

A coffee/tea break followed, giving everyone another welcome opportunity to chat face to face. Then we were treated to an indexing 'dance' from **Devon Thomas** and **Gwen Henson** on communicating with publishers and editors using the metaphor of the tango.

The first day of the conference was brought to a conclusion by the publishers' panel. Online from Stuttgart: **Tim Kersebohm** from Deutscher Apotheker-Verlag, and in Berlin: **Martin Müller** (Springer Nature) and **Joed Elich** (Brill) spoke to us about their respective companies' publications, with particular reference to their use of indexes.

The second day started with a Chinese perspective on indexing. **Joan Liu** addressed us from her quarantine hotel in China on 'Building China Legal Thesaurus to enhance legal literature organisation and retrieval'. Then **Sherry Xue**, also online, gave us 'A brief introduction to Chinese indexing standards'.

Next **Jochen Fassbender** in Bremen and **JoAnne Burek** in Berlin engaged us with a fascinating presentation on the international indexing dictionary. It covers German, English, Italian, Spanish, French, Dutch and Portuguese. It was interesting to find out that 'index' in French, Spanish and Portuguese refers to both the table of contents and the index. There were some terms, such as 'forcing sort', that could not be translated into all languages. The dictionary is developing all the time and it is hoped to add more languages, including Chinese and Japanese.

After the mid-morning refreshment break, **Glenda Browne**, **Walter Greulich** and **Pilar Wyman** (all in Berlin) gave us an

➡ p9

p8 ☞ e-book indexing update.

There is a slow but steady increase in e-book indexing. A number of matrix flowcharts illustrated how to navigate the various stages of the e-book index process.

Then it was time to brave the rain (the only day it rained when I was in Berlin), and dash over to a nearby restaurant for lunch. This time it was a German restaurant, and as we had been given a choice of just one dish with two variants: meat or vegetarian, service went much more smoothly than at the previous day's venue.

The final afternoon of the conference began with the presentation of the Moys–Crane Prize for 2021 to **Valeria Padalino**, who fortuitously was attending the conference in Berlin. The prize is awarded annually to an outstanding student who has completed the Society's training course.

The first speaker was **Judith**

Flanders, online from England.

In her talk entitled 'A place for everything, and everything that came before', Judith looked at the development of sorting systems. It was surprising to learn that alphabetisation did not become dominant until the fourteenth century. Until then, other systems: categorical, geographical and hierarchical were used.

Then **Dennis Duncan** (online from London) and **Paula**



Valeria Padalino with her certificate

Clarke Bain in Berlin brought the conference to a lively conclusion with their talk '*Index, a history of the: translating the index to*'. Paula and Dennis shared interesting snippets on the way the translation of the book into German and Italian was handled. Sadly, neither Paula nor Dennis was consulted about the translations, as this would have prevented errors appearing in the printed versions. The final index entry (Z, z, z 'And so to bed' {PCB}) was not the final entry in the Italian version; and Word Golf did not work in the German translation. On the other hand though, the Quiz question worked well, generating some rather amusing translations in both German and Italian.

All too soon the conference was over, leaving us feeling invigorated with much to mull over. Some people hurried off to the airport, while others still had time to explore Berlin before returning home.

... while Tanya Izzard participated online

Along with 60 other indexers and interested parties from around the world, I joined the conference remotely via Zoom; one of the great benefits of hybrid conferences is that it's possible for a much greater number and wider diversity of people to benefit from conferences. I'd volunteered to be one of the moderators for the event, along with **Ruth Ellis**; our role was to admit participants to the Zoom session, keep an eye on the chat and respond to any technical problems, and deal with questions to speakers. We had a technical rehearsal beforehand with **Ann Kingdom** and **Walter Greulich** of the DNI to make sure everything was working properly.

In terms of the conference speakers, about 10 delivered their sessions online, with 12 speakers presenting live in Berlin. From my perspective, it was slightly easier to hear when the presenter was also online, assuming of course that their microphone and

internet connections were working well; **Joan Lijun Liu**, presenting from China on building a legal thesaurus, was plagued by connectivity problems. But those presenting live in Berlin mostly did well with maintaining audibility for the Zoom audience. Visibility of all speakers and their slides was very good from my perspective; slide handouts have subsequently been made available to participants. The technical side of the hybrid conference generally worked well throughout.

Most of the speakers had time for questions afterwards. For the Zoom participants, questions built up in the chat screen during the talks. Ruth and I then raised questions for speakers at the end so they could be discussed with the participants in Berlin too. The facilitators in Berlin worked hard to ensure that questions from the conference room floor could be heard online, asking participants to

step up to a microphone. Blending the discussion across Zoom and in-person participants was more of a challenge. There were also some noticeable cultural differences in dealing with questions, perhaps inevitably for a conference with such an international focus. Some speakers welcomed interruptions whereas others wanted questions at the end only. One speaker asked for questions in the chat only, which was obviously harder for the in-person participants to engage with.

For online participants, the chat was a very useful place to raise and discuss the themes emerging from the talks, and there was broad engagement with this, with indexers sharing their experience and views. The chats were saved and shared with all the conference participants.

While the in-person conference was enjoying lunch and dinner, there were online sessions available ☞ p10

p9 ☞ for the Zoom participants. On the first day, we had the option of discussing *The Indexer* with **Mary Coe** or professional development strategies with **Melanie Gee**; Day 2

choices were indexing training with **Max MacMaster**, multilingual indexing with **Jochen Fassbender** and finding and keeping indexing clients with **Nicola King**. A relatively small

number of people joined these – even online participants have to have lunch – but they generated some interesting discussions. The Zoom rooms were kept open at the end of each day to allow for further networking, but this was less successful – the sort of loose, open discussion you get in person at a conference is much harder to achieve online.

This was the first hybrid conference I've participated in, after a number of online-only events, and despite a few hiccups it worked well. I think I gained as much professional learning as I would have done if I'd attended in person. The social aspect of conferences, however, was harder to find – Zoom can't realistically allow for those happenstance conversations you have in the lunch queue. The online networking sessions did go some way to mitigate this, and no doubt more options to support socialising online will emerge as hybrid conferences become more usual. My thanks and admiration go to the conference organisers for facilitating a hybrid event that allowed so many more of us to take part.



Walter and Peter Greulich, the technical team for the Berlin conference

My Past Life

Valeria Padalino on books

I always thought my interest in indexing was a direct product of my career in librarianship, but reflecting on it for this article, I think it started much earlier and with a love for books. I have never had a clear idea of what kind of career I wanted, I only knew it had to involve books both in their content and in physical form.

I grew up in a small town in Northern Italy, approximately half way between the city of Milan and Lake Como, and very close to the Grand Prix racing track in Monza. For us children, it was a thrill to hear the distant roar of Formula One from our back garden, but this is how far excitement goes in a small town in Northern Italy. Luckily we had access to plenty of books at home and from the local library and I read constantly. When I was about nine or ten, my mother thought I needed a bit of a reading challenge and gave me a copy of *Alice in Wonderland*. This was no ordinary copy as it was meant for English learners and had the original English on the recto and the Italian translation on the verso (*Alice nel*

Paese delle Meraviglie). At that time my knowledge of English was limited to “hello”, “goodbye”, “please”, and “thank you”, but armed with a vocabulary I tried to rise to the challenge by reading the original without looking at the translation. I was mercilessly defeated by the realisation that a translation is not merely about words but also about the culture that infuses them. I believe this was the defining moment that made me decide to study languages and literatures. I wanted to read books in the languages they were written in.

After school, I went to study Modern Languages and Literatures at the IULM University in Milan, mainly focusing on English and German. The course was very well structured and gave me the opportunity to choose subjects I still enjoy today, like ethnography, history, and art history. Surprisingly, I found that I was not interested in translating books myself and so didn't take up that subject, which during my time at IULM was taught by well-known novelist Tim Parks. The subject I

☞ p11

p 10 🔄 remember most fondly is English-American literature, with a focus on Beat literature. I recall walking in the lecture hall to the sound of jazz and being handed a map of Manhattan by our professor who insisted the best way to understand beat culture was through music and places. I still secretly thank him for his lectures.

My daily trips to the city were an excellent escape from small town life, but I wanted more and as a student of languages I had the perfect excuse to persuade my parents to send me abroad. I spent a delightful summer month in Berlin studying German, but my principal and most visited destination throughout the university years was London. The first time I visited this vibrant, chaotic and culturally diverse city, as a teenager in the late 1990s, I thought I landed on a different planet so different it was from my experience back home. I never suspected there could be so many different types of coffee and I had the feeling I could have stayed there my entire life and never do the same thing twice. As my English was getting better, my visits to London were getting longer (as long as I could find temporary work in cafes), but in so doing I was delaying my studies and testing my parents' patience. I decided it was more important to get a degree first and promised myself I would go back to London straight after. I just had to find a new excuse.

After graduating, I was still of the persuasion that I wanted to work with books and with my newly acquired academic education I naively thought librarianship would allow me to do just that: get paid to read books. How wrong I was I would find out soon enough, but for now I had to convince my parents that my postgraduate studies should continue in London. My choice to study abroad was only partly due to my eagerness to live in my dream city. The library master's degrees in Italy seemed too procedural and focused on legislation, while in the UK the emphasis seemed to be more on new technologies which is what I was more interested in exploring.

I enrolled in the MSc Library Science course at City University, as part-time student, a year after moving to London. I decided I needed some library experience first to test the waters and found a job as library assistant with the London Borough of Haringey, for which I still work. I am thankful to the librarian in charge of the branch where I was based, as she was herself studying toward a master's degree, and upon learning I was about

to embark on the same journey, took me under her wing and taught me the good, the bad and the ugly of being a public librarian. That paid off when, after only six months as library assistant, I was promoted to branch manager. I was still bemused by the fact that, regardless of being a librarian, reading was still confined to my free time and that most of the book knowledge I needed for my profession came from reviews, recommendations and yes, also indexes. My other point of contact with indexing then was during class visits, when I used to ask children to put themselves in alphabetical order by first name to teach them how it all works.

I have spent eight years in the branch manager position, during which time I gained my MSc and started working towards CILIP's Chartership, although I never got around to completing it. I found the job to be at times stressful, what with being responsible for the performance of the library, the health and safety of staff and visitors, and the occasional verbal abuse from disgruntled customers. Nevertheless, I learned a lot from the experience and particularly enjoyed organising book events with authors. One that stands out for me is meeting David Lloyd, best known as the illustrator for *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore.

I then went to work as Senior Librarian in the main branch Hornsey Library in Crouch End. Opened in 1965 by Princess Alexandra, the library is a Grade II listed building and often features in the London Open House weekend. Working at Hornsey Library for a librarian means the wonderful opportunity to browse the Reserve Stock, which occupies four large rooms in the basement. The collection, closed to the public but fully searchable via the online catalogue, is a treasure trove of fiction and non-fiction titles, mainly in the Arts and Humanities, dating back to the early 20th century, some earlier. Among the stacks one can find first editions, out-of-print titles, journal series now forgotten and very peculiar subjects

🔄 **p12**



Grade II-listed Hornsey Library and (ABOVE) one of the rooms in its basement, containing "a treasure trove of fiction and non-fiction titles".

Photos: Valeria Padalino

p 11 ↻ such as a 1948 guide to dowsing. One of the rooms is entirely dedicated to biographies, memoirs, diaries, letters and so forth by various personalities from all walks of life. While working there, I had the delightful task of taking members of the public on tours of the collection during the yearly celebrations for the library's anniversary.

I moved away from front line service in 2014, and since then I divide my days between commissioning contracts and buying books for the whole service. It was shortly after taking up this role that I read in the CILIP journal **Marian Aird's** article about her experience of being a freelance indexer. It was an inspiring moment for me. I had finally found a way to be paid for reading books and from the comfort of my home into the

bargain. However, it wasn't the right time for me as I was pregnant with my first child and I thought that was going to be enough for my physical and mental concentration. It was only a couple of years after going back to work part-time that I revisited the option and enrolled in the Training in Indexing course. It took me almost the full four years allowed to complete, after being slowed down by a second pregnancy and the lockdowns, but I have enjoyed every minute of it and I am proud to finally call myself an Accredited Indexer.

I completed the training in August 2021 and I am slowly getting commissions. My hope for the near future is to be able to give up my part-time library job and dedicate my professional life to full-time indexing.

My Neck of the Woods

Ruth Martin on the pleasures of Lamothe-Goas in the Gers department

My neck of the woods is literally at the neck of a wood. My house is directly opposite an entrance into the communal forest at the far edge of Lamothe-Goas, a hamlet in the Gers department of South-west France. The village 'proper' has 78 inhabitants. Our nearest town, and so our nearest shop, is 12km away. But, for all its remoteness, it's a remarkably cosmopolitan community, with residents originating from Italy, Portugal, Belgium, the UK (including yours truly), and a young man who was born in Nepal. The Nepalese link is the reason why Lamothe-Goas is the headquarters of the unlikely-sounding Gers-Himalayas Association and why, back in 2011, His

Holiness the Dalai Lama visited the village. We're still recovering from the shock.

Lamothe-Goas is in arable farming country. The wheat grown in the fields hereabouts is transported to Italy to make pasta. After that, we may have crops of strawberries, melons (the local Lectoure melon is a protected variety), oil seed rape, or crops for animal feed. In late summer, there is nothing but sunflowers. The acres of golden flowers attract tourists in July and August, but usually only the residents see the rows of bowed, brown and desiccated plants that are left to stand throughout September as their oil-rich seeds ripen. They have an eerie quality that always makes me think of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*.

There is very little animal farming, but we are certainly not short of wildlife. It is common to look out of the window and see deer grazing in our garden or a hare racing across the lawn. Hawks perch on treetops. Owls hoot at night and keep us awake. If we are ever out after dark, we must watch out for wild boar, which can turn fierce if they feel threatened. Once a badger ran across my path when I was out for a morning walk. A nearby pond attracts herons, bitterns and beaver-like creatures known as ragondins. It is true countryside, the sort I used to read about in Enid Blyton stories as a child, but didn't believe really existed any more until I came here.

Architecturally, Lamothe-Goas boasts a 19th-century church, with a graveyard full of monuments bearing surnames that still appear on the village's electoral roll. It's a pleasure to visit on 1st November, All Saints' Day, when the graves are decorated with flowers by members of these old families. It also has a chateau, parts of which date back to the 18th century. A striking feature of its history is that it has only ever been owned by women. A recent *châtelaine*, Denise Hachon-Rieu, is remembered with respect (and commemorated in Israel) for ↻ **p13**



Unexpected signpost in France. Photo by Ruth Martin

p12 ☉ hiding Jews in its outbuildings during the Second World War and for helping others to escape by supplying forged papers. Less illustriously, she was still the owner when a fire destroyed most of the main building in 2003. The chateau was extensively restored by Mme Hachon-Rieu's granddaughter, and now operates as holiday cottages and a yoga retreat.

My sister and I arrived in Lamothe-Goas in September 2006, with our laptops and our schoolgirl French, to take up residence in a former farmhouse that we had rented for the year. We were both at a crossroads in our lives, and the UK was still an EU Member State, so such adventures into Europe were possible. Having said that, it seemed unlikely that we would reach the end of the tenancy term, as we struggled with the language, the bureaucracy, the glacially slow broadband, and the mice in our kitchen, but the arrival of a very hungry tabby cat on our doorstep changed the course of our future lives. She solved the mouse problem at a stroke, but delivered us others, in the form of four kittens, who were born in the kitchen two months later. Suddenly, we had parental responsibilities, and were committed to the long-term. We registered ourselves as French tax resident *auto-entrepreneurs* (self-employed workers) before the kitties were weaned.

France is not an ideal place to start a business. From day one, you are taxed heavily, both as individuals and as an enterprise. Sixty percent of French workers are employed by the state, which, to a cynical, Anglo-Saxon mind might explain why the rest of us have to complete so many forms in order to stay on the right side of the law. During the Covid lockdowns, a new term arose and entered normal discourse – *télé-travailleurs* (tele-workers, people who work from home). Until then, home-working was a rare phenomenon, viewed with suspicion.

France is also a strange place to be an indexer, because most people haven't the faintest idea what I do for a living. In explaining my job to French people, I have to pull a book off the bookshelf and show them the index. I then watch their eyes glaze over as I try to explain why this alphabetical list of terms at the back of the book is preferable to the detailed contents listings at the front, which is their equivalent. I am officially registered as a *rédacteur*, or editor, because the term *indexeur* does not appear on the Government's listing of recognised professions.

But France is a very good place to live when one is not working. The French are masters of the art of the work-life balance, and once one is used to the nuisance of the shops shutting for two hours every day over lunch and the challenge of finding a pharmacy open on a Monday, it's admirable. You can get a GP appointment on the same day of asking, and there is generous financial assistance available from the state to cover all of life's emergencies. The local food and wine remain good, and a matter of conversational obsession, despite the recent proliferation of fast food outlets and delivery

services. It's also possible to buy exotic ingredients in supermarkets, and to eat vegetarian meals in restaurants, far more so than when we first arrived. We are yet to have a decent curry in France, but then, what's a heaven for? Culturally, we are well served in the Gers with art exhibitions, music festivals, theatre shows and the cinema. There's not a great deal in English, however, so my sister and I help to meet the expat demand as members of an amateur dramatics group.

Brexit was a trauma to us, and remains bothersome even after we eventually attained the visas that permit us to stay in France. A number of British acquaintances have had to return to the UK because their status changed, the weakened pound made life in the Eurozone unaffordable, or it no longer became possible to run their businesses. We must pay duty on UK imports, and fewer British companies are prepared to ship their goods to France in any event. Our bank now charges us 26 euros on every transfer we receive from our UK accounts. We also have the low-lying worry of an electoral victory by Marine Le Pen's *Rassemblement national* (the old National Front party) and of being given the order of *la botte* in the event of Frexit. A solution would be to become French citizens, so we're working on improving our language skills and integrating into French society with that end in view. More integration is no bad thing in itself, of course, so we are doing our best to regard the situation positively. I have been advised that I will need to show that my work benefits French people directly, which will not be easy, given the lack of awareness of indexing mentioned above. But I have had two French author clients so far, and hope for more.



Forêt Communale de Lamothe-Goas. Photo by Ruth Martin

So the fates do seem to be conspiring to turn our one-year *jeu d'esprit* into a permanent move. Whether we choose to stay in Lamothe-Goas remains to be seen, but somehow I can't see us decamping with our cats and laptops to a town or city after all these years of rural living. They have these new-fangled things called lampposts, for one thing, and traffic lights, and WiFi ... We'd rather take our chances with the wild boar.

Each year, elements in the media re-exhume one of the ghosts of the festive season: the fear of isolation. For anyone who actually experiences loneliness, these annual attempts to analyse and exorcise the affliction may well exacerbate rather than dispel the pain it brings. Official attempts to 'help', both in the press and in person, often do more harm than good. Some pundits address the isolated as if they are weak in the head. The patronising tone of the literature of Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM – isn't that so neat?) is enough to turn the stomach. Many of the proposed remedies – especially those of the "get out more" kind – ignore the high proportion of those whose unhappy isolation is largely a product of reduced mobility. The additional suspicion arises that well-meaning psychologists and columnists have invented a syndrome, that of feeling cut off when actually surrounded by friends and/or family. Does anyone spontaneously experience this or does it rather arise out of autosuggestion or the phenomenon of embracing a concept only when it has been named and aired?

Loneliness is proverbially accounted an affliction of old age. As one's physical options are reduced, so one's horizons are alleged to close in. Even for the housebound, this is not usually what happens to those who remain engaged with the world, who keep themselves informed, who habitually read books and periodicals, watch television and movies, keep up with music, and maintain a lively level of gossip and news exchange with friends. One of the arguments that used to be trotted out to warn against a gay lifestyle was that (mysteriously) it was some kind of guarantee of being forgotten and neglected in old age, as if heterosexual couples were apt to arrange it that they all expired neatly and simultaneously. In practice, loneliness is rather more common among the young who, by circumstance or ill luck, find themselves assured that everyone is out having fun except themselves.

Your correspondent indeed, denied entry into a university hall of residence because his awarding of a place came very late (not his fault and a long story), was initially obliged to lodge with the grandmother-in-law of one of his former teachers, cutting him off from most social life with fellow freshers and necessitating considerable travel back and forth each day in an unfamiliar city. It was, not surprisingly, the most dispiriting period of his life.

Loneliness can certainly cause stress and psychological damage. Those who are afflicted need to be self-aware enough to recognise it and seek to address its relief. Many people experience a related but quite distinct sensation, that of aloneness. Some are reclusive by nature or habit, some learn gladly to embrace their own company, some relish the freedom to do what the hell they like and

get on with their own stuff, and some simply reject what they deem "a fuss". Just because a person sees no one else over Christmas, it doesn't automatically follow that he or she is overwhelmed by self-pity. There are many attractive alternatives to being obliged to be pleasant to relations with whom one may have little in common the rest of the year. In a crowded and urgent world, being solitary, like being quiet, can be a rare blessing.

"L'enfer c'est les autres [Hell is other people]" Sartre has a character say in his play *Huis Clos*. He meant that our self-worth is clouded by being seen through the biased eyes of others, as exemplified by how they react to us and treat us, rather than by our own unsparing judgment. It means we need to have our own space in order to order ourselves.



Image by Kristen Radtke

However many we may share our homes with, we indexers are solo workers, staying in all day, foregoing the social aspects of service industries. And some of us do live alone, either because we long or always have done so or because we have been bereaved or have separated or are empty-nesters. So the necessity to make strategies for psychological self-sufficiency has been brought home. As we are all, by definition, online, we have ready access to all manner of contacts through which we can ameliorate unwelcome sensations of neglect or invisibility. Social media has transformed the notion of connectivity. There is no substitute for face-to-face encounters, of course, but conversations are rather more readily engaged online than they ever were when a phone only meant a landline and expenditure that grew along with distance.

Being the sole occupant of the home may come upon us of a sudden, something unlooked for and unanticipated. My father, who had carefully arranged his affairs to ensure that "I leave your mother all right", found himself widowed and having to learn the basic skills of household management that he had always assumed would fall to his other half. Not surprisingly, he had remarried within eighteen months. Pre-Internet and with a lack of hobbies and precious few cultural resources, living alone would have worn him down.

Solitary living requires management. Those ➤ p15

Thora Hird ▶

p14 ☞ living alone, especially in old age, are wise to establish a routine that, if broken, indicates that something may be amiss. Sending a text or an email or a direct Facebook message at the same time each day to a trusted contact (preferably notably younger) confirms that all is well. If living alone is leavened by keeping a pet, the need for other people to know quickly that one is in trouble is heightened; a ravenous dog is a liability as well as an object of pity. To be felled by a non-fatal heart attack or stroke is likely to strand the sufferer alive and perhaps semi-conscious. But a simple fall or slip onto the floor can put someone in mortal peril, like Thora Hird in Alan Bennett's famous



Talking Heads playlet, *A Cream Cracker Under the Settee*. To imagine this won't/can't happen to you or to postpone setting up a rescue line because it doesn't seem pressing to

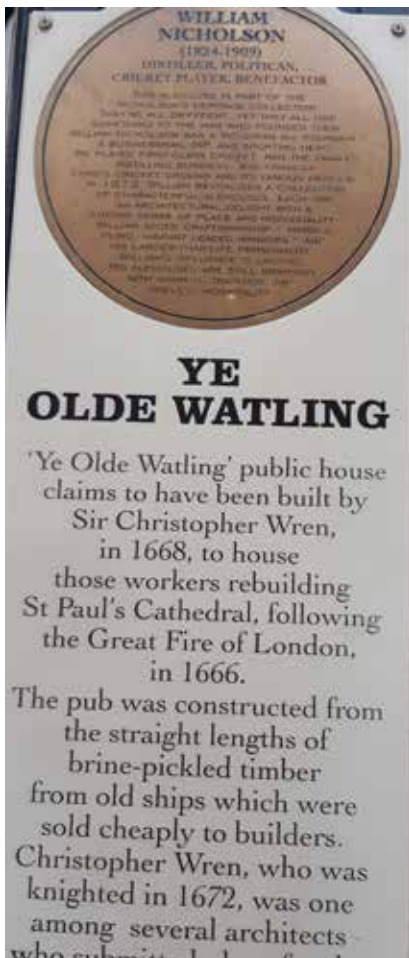
be done is to risk a sudden crisis and perhaps a tragedy.

The Locator

Local Groups

London

In what is becoming an annual event, seven of us met in December for a Christmas lunch in Ye Olde



Watling pub in the heart of the city of London. The historic building was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in 1668 to house his workers and, most importantly, provide somewhere for them to drink. The plans for St Paul's Cathedral were apparently drawn up in what is now the dining room — quite a claim to fame.

We spent a little time trying to work out the answers to **Melanie Gee's** Christmas Lists which also seems to be becoming an annual event. Our favourite entries this year included "harmonium with mouse-proof pedals" and the rather-too-seasonal "Christmas: food poisoning

from turkey consumption".

Rohan Bolton

londongroup@indexers.org.uk

Sussex

Five members of the SI Sussex group met for lunch at the Black Jug in Horsham in November. The meeting was predominantly a social occasion and the largest in-person meeting we have had since before the pandemic, but we did also discuss professional matters. **Helen Bilston** shared details of a useful tool, Draftable, which is software that allows you to compare two different PDFs; invaluable when doing work ☞ **p16**



Valeria Padalino, Nicola King and Beverley Winkler raise a Christmas toast.

Pictures by Rohan Bolton

LOCAL GROUPS

p15 ➔ on revised proofs or updated editions. We also discussed the difficulties of getting paid by overseas clients; the future of Twitter and whether it will continue to be a useful place for individual, and SI, marketing under its new ownership; and how to deal with changes requested to indexes by clients. **Jan Worrall** had success with explaining to clients that removing double entries or cross-references would damage the syndetic structure of the index – the magic word 'syndetic' seems to get over the indexer's expertise and knowledge. **Rachel Gee** reported back on her experience of delivering a workshop on indexing at the CIEP 2022 conference, both in-person and online; the group was generally enthusiastic about a SI conference in 2023. We also discussed the vulnerabilities of indexing software and tools, in the light of the recent sad death of Margaret Berson, creator of the highly useful indexing Megabit Macros. Tentative plans for meetings in 2023 were made, and for an online peer review that will be open to SI members from all regions.

Tanya Izzard
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Three Choirs

We ended our year with our first planning meeting in ages. Please note the Zoom dates have been changed a bit due to a conflict. If anyone wants to join us for Zooms or real dates, please let me know. All are welcome.

All Zooms are at 10:30 as are most of the get togethers.

Jan: Zoom 17th

Feb: Zoom is now on the 21st

March: 21st at Malmesbury Abbey

April: Zoom 26th

May: 18th visit to Cirencester

June: Zoom now the 12th

July: visit to the Bodleian in Oxford

August: Zoom now the 22nd

Sept: Zoom on the 14th

Oct: Pencil in the Batsford Arboretum.

Nov: Zoom on the 22nd

I hope everyone has a healthy, busy and happy 2023.

Pam Scholefield
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