INDEXES, INDEXING, AND THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA


The Bibliographical Society of Canada was established in 1946 with the following three objectives:

1. To promote bibliographical publications;
2. To encourage the preservation, and extend the knowledge of printed books and manuscripts – particularly those relating to Canada;
3. To facilitate the exchange of information concerning such rare books.¹

Despite the lack of any specific reference to indexes or index-making, these terms were understood to form an integral part of the Society’s objectives. Throughout its formative years, the Bibliographical Society of Canada devoted much of its attention to the basic organizational details of defining its scope of activity, identifying priorities within this area, and developing an effective means of communication for its membership. These aspects of organizational existence necessarily took priority over the development of any single area of bibliographical endeavour.

It is possible to trace the evolution of the Bibliographical Society of Canada’s interest in, and commitment to, indexing in the Society’s publications. Initially, in the context of a general survey of bibliographical activity in Canada reference is made to specific index projects.² This in turn led to the suggestion


² BSC Bulletin/Newsletter, no. 3 April 1950, p.2; The Hamilton Public Library was mentioned as maintaining indexes to one-act plays and pictures.
of index projects\textsuperscript{3}, to the recognition of a need for indexes and indexing\textsuperscript{4}, and
to a lengthy discussion of the need for a list of indexes to Canadian materials\textsuperscript{5}.

The primary objective of the Bibliographical Society of Canada is its determination to function as a publishing society. This specific role was recommended by the late Mr. E.C. Kyte as early as 1946 \textsuperscript{6}, and has been re-emphasized by Professor Lochhead, Past President of the Society, as recently as 1974 in the following terms:

... this organization, established in 1946, should be supported, strengthened and encouraged to share in bibliographical ventures. Its place should be made clear and its role as a 'publishing society' given prominence ... It is a Society of national scope and growing stature.\textsuperscript{7}

In terms of this acknowledged role, the Bibliographical Society of Canada has demonstrated its commitment to indexing by publishing two periodical indexes — the earliest in 1962.\textsuperscript{8}

By 1969 it had become apparent to the Society that there was a need to define its role in, and the extent of its commitment to, index-making. At the Fall 1969 meeting of the Council it was determined to establish an Index Committee

\textsuperscript{3} BSC Newsletter, v. 1, no. 1, 1955, p.5

\textsuperscript{4} Malchelosse, Gérard. "Discours de Mr. Malchelosse devant l'assemblée de la Société bibliographique du Canada." BSC Newsletter, v. 1, no. 3, 1956, p. 5: "Un livre qui traite de matière historique et qui n'a pas d'index est comme un corps sans âme... Faire un index, c'est assurer une place important dans une bibliothèque."

\textsuperscript{5} Tanghe, Dr. Raymond. "A co-operative project undertaken by the Society: a new bibliography of Canadian bibliographies." BSC Newsletter, v. 2, no. 1, September 1958, p. 3

"The bibliography of Canadian bibliographies; a co-operative project undertaken by the Society." BSC Newsletter, v.2, no. 2 December 1958, p.2

----- BSC Newsletter, v. 2, no. 3, March 1959, p. 3

Tanghe, Dr. Raymond. "The bibliography of Canadian bibliographies." BSC Newsletter, v. 2, no. 4, June 1959, p. 2

"The bibliography of Canadian bibliographies." BSC Newsletter, v. 3, no. 3, March 1960, p. 2

\textsuperscript{6} BSC. Minutes of Meeting, May 20, 1946, p. 2

\textsuperscript{7} Lochhead, Professor D.G. 'National bibliography — retrospective.' Paper delivered at the National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography, Vancouver, May 1974, p.13

\textsuperscript{8} Brown, Mary Markham. An index to the literary garland (Montreal, 1838 — 1851). Toronto, BSC, 1962. x, 61 p.


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within the Bibliographical Society of Canada "with the purpose of examining
the present level and of assessing the future needs of indexing in Canada"9, and a Chairman was appointed. The membership of the Society was inform-
ed of this decision in May 1970 by means of an open letter.10 The objectives
of the Index Committee at this time were envisaged as:

1. maintaining an index to the BSC Papers, and to other
publications allied to the interests and purposes of
the Society;
2. acting as a clearinghouse for indexing projects;
3. promoting the production of indexes;
4. publicizing developments in indexing.

At an early stage in the existence of the Index Committee, it became apparent
that some means of communication among its expanding and wide-spread mem-
bership was necessary. To this end a Newsletter was issued containing articles
on indexing and index projects, lists and reviews of current works on indexing,
lists of index projects both in progress and completed, and short announcements
of interest to indexers. Four numbers of the Newsletter appeared between July

In January 1971 an executive was created for the Index Committee consisting
of a Chairman, an Editor, two regional Technical Advisors, and an Advisor on
Retrospective Indexing. The Index Committee undertook two surveys on Cana-
dian indexing. The first survey, distributed to over 350 recipients in March 1971,
was intended to determine the amount of indexing done at the local (institu-
tional) level, and to examine the limited number of commercial indexing ser-
dices in Canada. A summary report of this survey was published in 1972.11
A second survey, on book indexing policies and practices, was distributed to
174 publishers and related associations in Canada, in August of 1972. A full
report of this survey was published the following Spring.12

At a meeting of the executive in May 1971, called to discuss the role of the
Committee, with observers from the University of Toronto Faculty of Library
Science and the Ontario Library Association, it was decided that:

the Index Committee should concern itself primarily with the
promotion of indexing and the training of indexers, rather than
undertaking major indexing projects;

a current union list will be maintained so that the Index Committee
may fulfil a proper clearinghouse function.13

9 BSC Index Committee Newsletter, no. 1, July 1970, p. 1
10 On the formation of an Index Committee. Toronto, BSC, 1970. 41.
11 Greig, Peter, and Joyce Tracy. "Indexing in Canada: local indexing and commercial
services." The indexer, v. 8, no 2, October 1972. p. 88-93
13 "Executive meeting report." BSC. Index Committee Newsletter, no. 3, April 1971, p.2
In pursuance of the above objectives, the Index Committee: (1) prepared indexes to both the BSC Papers and to Canadian Notes & Queries at five-volume intervals; (2) provided technical advice and instruction in answer to queries received; (3) investigated the possibility of an indexer-training programme in collaboration with a staff member of the University of Toronto Faculty of Library Science which led to a workshop, conducted on October 16, 1971, by Professor Ann H. Schabas of the Faculty of Library Science.

In 1973, following a review of the Index Committee's activities by the Council of the Society, it was decided to replace the existing formal committee structure by the appointment of a single member as Indexer to the Bibliographical Society of Canada. The decision of Council to dissolve the Index Committee was contingent on the difficulties of bringing together a wide-spread group to operate effectively a cohesive programme of activities. This change did not lessen the Society's commitment to the aims of the Index Committee in any way; rather, it was expected to serve to broaden the responsibility for the fulfilment of these same activities and objectives by extending the work to the entire membership of the Society.

Since 1973, the Indexer to the Society has continued to provide advice on indexing projects in answer to queries; to maintain an index to both the BSC Papers and the Canadian Notes & Queries; and to publish news of indexing activity in Canada at irregular intervals in the BSC Bulletin (n.s.). The Indexer to the Society developed a limited standard relevant to the acceptability of indexes for publication by the Society in 1974-75. More recently, the Indexer to the Society has served as a special advisor to the Canadian Library Association's Review Committee for the Canadian Periodical Index, and in a more limited capacity with regard to advising on the section on indexing in the planned revision of the Canadian Government Style Manual.

While the Bibliographical Society of Canada's increased participation in indexing during the past seven years has contributed to a greater articulation of this part of the total programme than any other portion, it has not resulted in the evolution of a specific role with well-defined parameters. Traditionally the Society has viewed itself, in general terms, as a publishing society concerned with the discovery, preservation and dissemination of bibliographical information, which would facilitate the use of Canadian materials. The Society's role, then, has been expressed in terms of a total bibliographical activity in which the parts, such as the occasional publication of an index or the general examination of indexing activity in Canada, are defined only insofar as they contribute to objectives of the Society as a whole. Such a view has tended to inhibit the usefulness of the Society's activity in specific areas of bibliographical endeavour, by not providing more definite objectives and controls within these areas.

In the past two years this traditional umbrella policy of the Bibliographical Society of Canada has raised some external comment, specifically directed to
the Society's role in indexing. The National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography, meeting in May 1974 in Vancouver, recommended that:

the Canada Council and the Bibliographical Society of Canada explore jointly methods by which the Council might support bibliographical endeavour and the publication of Canadian bibliographies (Recommendation 4);

the Bibliographical Society of Canada be urged to establish such organization and procedures as will result in the complete indexing of retrospective newspapers and periodicals (Recommendation 17).

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In a report on the recommendations passed at the National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography the Canadian Library Association's CACUL Committee reiterated that "concern about newspaper and periodical indexes was one of the recurring themes at the Conference, " but that it questioned "whether such indexing should be the responsibility of the Bibliographical Society of Canada." [15]

Given the relatively small membership of the Bibliographical Society of Canada and, consequently, its limited human and financial resources, such concern as expressed in the CACUL Committee report is a legitimate factor in limiting the involvement of the Society in not only the area of indexing, but also in bibliographical work as a totality. The Society has always expressed its willingness to co-operate with any other organization to promote bibliographical endeavour. Currently it is one of the groups represented on the Committee on Bibliographical Services for Canada which is concerned with the definition of general Canadian bibliographical needs and priorities and their resolution. In addition, the Society has been engaged in a dialogue with the Canada Council for some time to determine possible areas of support for bibliographical work in Canada.

Even more recently, in the "Retrospective Indexing" section of the report of the Canadian Library Association's Review Committee for the Canadian Periodical Index, further areas of co-operation were suggested:

The Review Committee for the Canadian Periodical Index recommends that the Canadian Library Association, in collaboration with the Bibliographical Society of Canada, the National Library of Canada and other interested organizations, establish and promote the use of a set of index standards suitable to the nature of retrospective indexing (Recommendation 9);


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The Review Committee for the Canadian Periodical Index recommends that the Canadian Library Association undertake such studies as are necessary to establish the respective markets for (a) retrospective indexes to individual Canadian periodical titles, and (b) a retrospective general periodical index for Canadian periodical titles, possibly in conjunction with the Bibliographical Society of Canada (Recommendation 10);

The Review Committee for the Canadian Periodical Index recommends that the Canadian Library Association, on the basis of a market study for this retrospective general periodical index for Canadian periodical titles, investigate, in collaboration with the Bibliographical Society of Canada and other interested organizations, how best they might be achieved (Recommendation 11).16

The production of a general periodical index to Canadian periodical titles is not only beyond the available human resources of the Bibliographical Society of Canada, but would surpass its financial resources as well. With the number of commercial services — the Canadian Periodical Index, RADAR, the Canadian Education Index — already providing access to current periodical titles in general, it would appear to be more realistic for the Society to promote the indexing of individual retrospective periodical titles. Through market studies of its own, or in co-operation with other interested organizations, it would be possible for the Society, even with its lack of broad financial resources, to establish the saleability of an index to a given periodical title, and to provide the standards necessary for such a work. At the same time, it would be feasible to participate in a market study with regard to the production of a general periodical index to determine if the Bibliographical Society of Canada can undertake to support any portion of the work.

The above recommendations, and the Bibliographical Society of Canada's gradual growth of involvement in indexing during the past seven years, suggest that:

- the Society should limit itself to considerations involving the indexing of retrospective materials, leaving current periodical materials to the existing commercial services;
- the Society, in terms of its commitment to retrospective indexing, should consider primarily the publication of indexes to individual periodical titles, rather than the publication of general periodical indexes;
- the Society should not involve itself in actively compiling indexes, except in the case of its own publications or closely related ones;


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- the Society, where its own financial resources are inadequate, should investigate and recommend alternate sources of financial support, possibly in collaboration with other interested organizations;
- the Society should, in collaboration with other interested organizations, establish relevant standards for retrospective indexes and indexing;
- the Society should produce general guidelines for indexing;
- the Society should continue to offer such advice and instruction as is possible, given the human resources available;
- the Society should act as a clearinghouse for indexing projects;
- the Society should issue a bibliography of Canadian indexes, similar to the *Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies*. 