SI 1957–2015   A selective timeline   SfEP 1988–2015
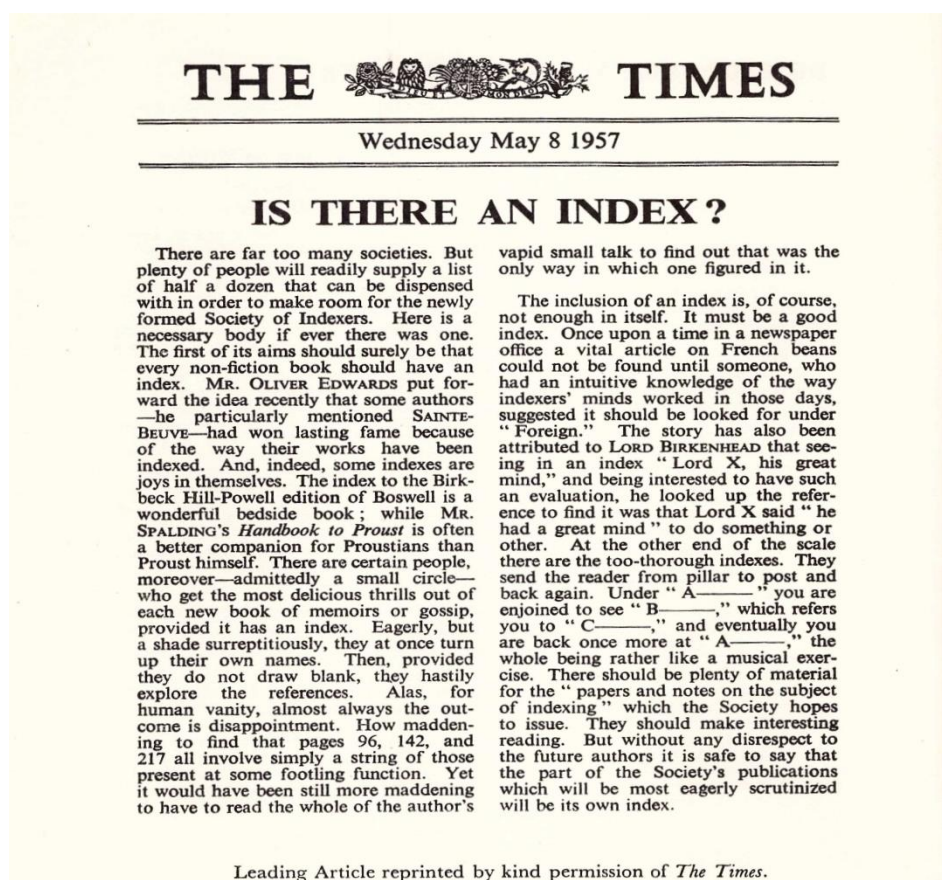
1957   Society of Indexers (SI) founded by freelance indexer and former civil servant and barrister G. Norman Knight, following an advert in the *TLS* and 'several discreet luncheons' at his club; annual subscription 2 guineas
65 people attend inaugural meeting

1958   First issue of *The Indexer* published, including a message from Prime Minister Harold Macmillan
SI membership reaches 150
First SI training course held (series of six lectures) in London

1960   Wheatley Medal for an outstanding index established by Library Association and SI

1961   First SI one-day conference, jointly with ASLIB (London)
SI Library established (housed in Library Association's basement)

1967   SI membership reaches over 250

1968   Register of Indexers established; the title of Registered Indexer conferred on those who had demonstrated a high degree of professional competence

THE TIMES

Wednesday May 8 1957

IS THERE AN INDEX?

There are far too many societies. But plenty of people will readily supply a list of half a dozen that can be dispensed with in order to make room for the newly formed Society of Indexers. Here is a necessary body if ever there was one. The first of its aims should surely be that every non-fiction book should have an index. MR. OLIVER EDWARDS put forward the idea recently that some authors —he particularly mentioned SAINTE-BEUVE—had won lasting fame because of the way their works have been indexed. And, indeed, some indexes are joys in themselves. The index to the Birkbeck Hill-Powell edition of Boswell is a wonderful bedside book ; while MR. SPALDING's *Handbook to Proust* is often a better companion for Proustians than Proust himself. There are certain people, moreover—admittedly a small circle— who get the most delicious thrills out of each new book of memoirs or gossip, provided it has an index. Eagerly, but a shade surreptitiously, they at once turn up their own names. Then, provided they do not draw blank, they hastily explore the references. Alas, for human vanity, almost always the outcome is disappointment. How maddening to find that pages 96, 142, and 217 all involve simply a string of those present at some footling function. Yet it would have been still more maddening to have to read the whole of the author's vapid small talk to find out that was the only way in which one figured in it.

The inclusion of an index is, of course, not enough in itself. It must be a good index. Once upon a time in a newspaper office a vital article on French beans could not be found until someone, who had an intuitive knowledge of the way indexers' minds worked in those days, suggested it should be looked for under "Foreign." The story has also been attributed to LORD BIRKENHEAD that seeing in an index "Lord X, his great mind," and being interested to have such an evaluation, he looked up the reference to find it was that Lord X said "he had a great mind " to do something or other. At the other end of the scale there are the too-thorough indexes. They send the reader from pillar to post and back again. Under " A———" you are enjoined to see " B———," which refers you to " C———," and eventually you are back once more at " A———," the whole being rather like a musical exercise. There should be plenty of material for the " papers and notes on the subject of indexing " which the Society hopes to issue. They should make interesting reading. But without any disrespect to the future authors it is safe to say that the part of the Society's publications which will be most eagerly scrutinized will be its own index.

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1973   Indexing correspondence course run by Rapid Results College established

1976   First 'national' SI conference (London); first local SI group established (Merseyside)

1977   First Carey Award for services to indexing awarded to G. Norman Knight

1978   SI celebrates 'coming of age' with international conference at Roehampton; membership over 500

1979   First edition of G. Norman Knight's *Indexing: the art of* published posthumously

Plus ça change!

One of the most difficult enterprises that people undertake is the running of a professional organization by amateurs. … We have almost reached the point where the only way in which more members can make time to do Society work is by sacrificing some of the time they are able to set aside for their own indexing work. Even if willing to do this, they often cannot afford it.

John Gordon, SI Secretary 1975–1980, retirement speech

1980   First SI two-day conference (Cambridge)

1981   SI establishes 'supervision' scheme for newly qualified indexers

1982   First issue of SI directory, *Indexers Available,* published

1983   SI membership exceeds 600
Book Indexing Postal Tutorials (BIPT) course established
SI produces first issue of *Microindexer*, reflecting indexers' increasing use of computers (published irregularly until mid-1990s)

1988   At SI conference in Cheltenham in July, informal conversations take place between a number of key people who feel that it is time to set up a similar organisation for freelance editors and proofreaders

1988   The Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP) is founded by a small group of volunteers led by Norma Whitcombe
In November, a meeting at ASLIB's premises in London, with more than 60 attending, discusses purposes of a new society

1988   Revised edition of BS3700 *Recommendations for the preparation of indexes* … published
First edition of SI's distance-learning course, *Training in Indexing*, published

1989   First SFEP members' meeting held in March
In November, SFEP holds first AGM and the constitution is adopted
Judith Butcher, author of C*opy-editing*, becomes SFEP president

1989   SI international conference on the island of Hvar, off the Yugoslav coast

Norma Whitcombe: founder and first chair of SfEP

This photo was published in Bell, Hazel K., 'SfEP: from isolation to professionalization', *Learned Publishing*, Vol. 10, No. 4, October 1997. Photo reproduced by kind permission of ALPSP.

1990   First SFEP conference (Cambridge); annual conference held ever since

1990   Second edition of SI's distance-learning course, *Training in Indexing*, published

1991   SI SWOTC analysis concludes that Weaknesses outnumber Strengths and Threats outnumber Opportunities; lack of administrative HQ and paid staff are key issues

1991   SFEP begins sharing premises informally with the Society of Indexers in Rochester Road, London, in the home of an SI member

1991   Norma Whitcombe, the founder and first chair of SFEP, dies aged 49

1992   SI publishes first in a series of Occasional Papers in Indexing (Hazel Bell's *Indexing biographies … *)

1993   SFEP sets up Whitcombe Training Fund, in memory of Norma, with the goal of providing training for freelances, and decides to hold an annual series of 'Whitcombe lectures'

1993   SFEP and SI employ their first paid secretary as a joint venture, based at the Rochester Road office

1994   SFEP membership reaches 1000

Fun with finance

In the 1990s when I was on the SFEP committee the idea of offering a joint subscription to people who wanted to join both societies came up, more than once. I counted up the overlap in membership and it was 90+, which at that time would have been considerably less than 10% of the SFEP membership. So the overlap wasn't large in real terms, but probably seemed greater than it was because three or four committee members were also active SI members – Michèle [Clarke], Val Elliston, Christine Shuttleworth, and myself. The idea of a joint sub finally died, to the relief of those of us who would have had to work out the financial details, although the two societies have always offered concessionary prices to one another's members for courses etc. … We had a lot of fun as well as a lot of hard work.

Kathleen Lyle, June 2015

1995   SI membership exceeds 950
                David Crystal completes three-year term as SI president

1995   First SFEP Code of Practice published

1996   SI newsletter renamed *SIdelights* and issued regularly four times a year
                SI's Bristol conference marks change from biennial to annual conferences

1996   New SFEP constitution and regulations adopted, introducing distinction between
                members and associates

1996   SFEP and SI move to Mermaid House, I Mermaid Court, near London Bridge

Life for the SI/SFEP administrator, Sue King, at Mermaid Court in 1997

The only trouble is that the membership at large (of both societies) tends to overestimate what can be achieved by a part-time officer, and to wonder why phone messages and letters are not answered instantly … Inevitably the balance of work fluctuates between SI and SFEP from week to week and it has to be carefully managed. The most pressing task is usually the administration of the training scheme for SI and the Registration scheme for SFEP because both societies put a very high value on producing a well-trained membership … Every day that Sue is in the office she has to play the answerphone tapes (for both societies) and note down the action to be taken. There can be 50 messages per society per week, the simple ones handled by volunteers, the rest needing Sue's detailed attention. She also has to keep the membership records up to date. Committee meetings, of which there are many, need room bookings and agenda papers. … Equipment currently consists of one Windows computer (SFEP's will surely have arrived by the time you read this!), a bog-standard copying machine which is sometimes kept so busy it has to be allowed to cool down, two answerphones, an internal house telephone and a modem for e-mail … Oh, and a most important gadget: an electric kettle, which we sometimes feel is the only thing that keeps us going – that and Sue's almost unfailing cheerfulness and energy.

                    Extract from 'A day in the life of SI – at Mermaid House', *SIdelights*, Summer 1997

1996   Michèle Clarke retires from SFEP chair and starts gnomes society

1997   SFEP *Newsletter* is renamed *Copy*Right

1997   SI annual conference in Dublin coincides with funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales

1998   SI website established and its directory*, Indexers Available,* goes online

1999   National SFEP meeting in York discusses membership structure and a working party set
                up

1999   Workload at Mermaid House increases and SI moves to the Globe Centre, Sheffield
                and employs part-time administrator. SFEP remains at Mermaid Court

1999   SI establishes email discussion list: SIdeline
                First international agreement drawn up between SI and the American Society of
                Indexers (ASI), the Australian Society of Indexers (AUSSI, later ANZSI) and the Indexing
                and Abstracting Society of Canada (IASC, later ISC/SCI); subsequently amended at
                triennial meetings of ICRIS (the International Committee of Representatives of
                Indexing Societies) in 2006, 2009 and 2012 and extended to include indexing societies
                and networks in South Africa, China, the Netherlands and Germany

Four happy gnomes are we

Once upon a time a time, there lived a book-loving gnome called Cyril, who lived in a garden under a Hebe bush. He was very lonely and was greatly pleased when, as four years passed, he was joined in spirit by a friend, Jo Green, an Italian immigrant from an opera. Over the years, three more friends have joined Cyril's happy band: Haifetz, an Israeli violin player; Chinese Tao, who spends of life rocking in a hammock; and Fergie, who will be fishing for his supper in a Welsh lake, red-nosed and chewing madly on gum.

Thus runs this very silly tradition. Cyril was given to me when I finished my chairman's stint, a great weight of concrete, which may be unable to be transported much longer to special conference gnome meetings owing to his guardian's increasing difficulty in carrying him around! He was named after a wonderful double-act speech about the role of compositors and printers' proofreaders (professions no longer practised) given by two senior OUP desk editors at the 1994 conference: they were Cyril and Mick. As my nickname is Miki, it seemed appropriate to call him Cyril.

Undaunted by all this silliness, I decided to humiliate all chairs similarly from then on, so Kath, Naomi and Penny were duly given their lifelong friends.

Michèle Clarke

Former SFEP/SfEP chairs with gnomes (from left to right): Michèle Clarke (1992–1996), Naomi Laredo (2000–2004), Penny Williams (2004–2008), Kathleen Lyle (1996–2000)
Photo reproduced by kind permission of Michèle Clarke

2000   SI establishes Bernard Levin Award for services to the Society

2001   New SFEP constitution and regulations include new membership structure and admission criteria; those who joined before 1996 automatically become full members

2001   *Indexing: the Manual of Good Practice,* by SI member Pat Booth, published by K G Saur in association with SI

2002   SI office relocates to Blades Enterprise Centre, adjacent to Sheffield United ground (its former office at the Globe Centre later flooded in the 2007 Sheffield Flood)
Third edition of SI's distance-learning training course, *Training in Indexing*, published

2002   SFEP relaunches as Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP) with new logo
SfEP office relocates from Mermaid Court to Riverbank House, Fulham
SfEP launches Accreditation in Proofreading

Moving the SfEP office from 'truly ghastly' Mermaid Court, 2002 (from left to right): Val Rice's second son, Andrew; her husband, David; Val Rice (treasurer); Eric Smith (accreditation co-ordinator); Naomi Laredo (chair); Jon Reed (now Naomi's husband)
Photo reproduced by kind permission of Val Rice and Eric Smith

2003   SfEP is incorporated as Society for Editors and Proofreaders, a non-profit-distributing organisation, and new articles of association and by-laws are drawn up
SfEP Council is formed from general committee and these members become directors

2003   SI features in BBC Radio 4's 'Front Row' programme on indexes
Article in *Eve* magazine leads to a dramatic (but short-lived) bulge in SI membership to almost 950
SI establishes Betty Moys award for promising new indexer

2004   *Copy*Right is redesigned and renamed *Editing Matters*
David Crystal OBE elected (and still is) honorary vice-president of SfEP

2004   SI discontinues printed version of *Indexers Available*
SI establishes new management structure based around functional directorates, with a smaller Executive Board replacing the former Council, a larger Consultative Council for grass-roots representation, and the centralisation of more administrative tasks in the office (staffed by full-time administrator and part-time assistant)

2005   Professor John Sutherland becomes SI president

2006   First SfEP Guide – Val Rice's *Starting Out: Setting up a small business* – published; there are now eight guides
Last printed version of SfEP directory distributed
Fourth edition of *Butcher's Copy-editing* published

2006   Rent hike forces SI office to move again, to Woodbourn Business Centre, Sheffield

2007   SI celebrates 50th birthday with three-day conference at Roehampton, is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, establishes code of conduct and disciplinary procedure, and unveils new logo (designed by SfEP member Averill Buchanan)

2008   SfEP appoints first executive secretary and office moves across the Thames to Erico House, Upper Richmond Road, Putney
SfEP WIKI launched
City & Guilds Licentiateship in Editorial Skills, created jointly with SfEP, introduced

2008   *From Flock Beds To Professionalism: A history of index-makers* by Hazel K. Bell is published by HKB Press
The Indexer begins publishing four issues a year

2009   First City & Guilds Licentiateships in Editorial Skills awarded to SfEP members
SfEP celebrates 21st birthday at York conference

2009   SfEP and SI respond to Skillset's draft strategy for publishing industry

2009   SI AGM agrees new membership structure: Student, MSocInd, MSocInd (Adv), Fellow
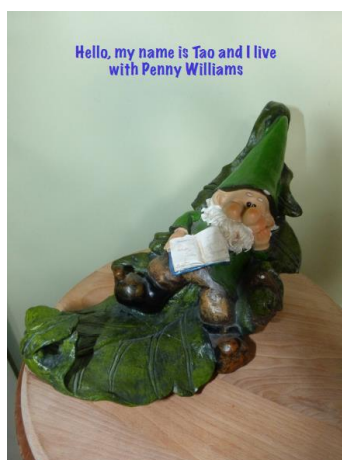
Two more chair's gnomes: Penny Williams (2004–2008), Sarah Price (2008–2011)
Photos reproduced by kind permission of Penny Williams and Sarah Price

The stunning venue for SI's 2010 conference in Middleburg, The Netherlands
Photo reproduced by kind permission of Ann Kingdom

2010   SfEP holds conference in Glasgow; 1995 and 2001 conferences were in Edinburgh

2010   SI's third overseas conference (Middelburg, The Netherlands)
             Online version of SI's Training in Indexing course (4th edition) launched
             SI Consultative Council holds final meeting
             SI membership falls below 600

2011   SfEP and SI involved in updating the National Occupational Standards for Publishing

2011   SI establishes Publishing Technology Group (PTG) to look at implications for indexing of
             ebook and digital publishing developments

2011   SfEP runs successful seminar at London Book Fair
             SfEP purchases new database, providing and developing greater online services to
             members

2012   SfEP introduces Judith Butcher Award to recognise one member each year who gives a
             great deal of time and commitment to the organisation
             SfEP membership reaches 1500

2012   Substantial development of social media presence through Facebook and Twitter

2012   SI's Publishing Technology Group launches website

2012   SfEP Professional Development Day for legal editors (includes SI speaker)
SfEP office moves along the Upper Richmond Road to Apsley House

2013   Launch of first SfEP online CPD course
SfEP Membership Working Group morphs into Futures Group

2013   First SI online workshop
SI eventually relaunches directory, *Indexers Available*, with controlled list of subject headings and much more detail about members' subject specialisms

2014   First online-only issue of *Editing Matters*
Second edition of *New Hart's Rules* published (editor in chief: SfEP's Anne Waddingham)
SfEP AGM approves proposed new membership structure

2014   SI and SfEP joint seminar at London Book Fair, together with the Institute of Translating and Interpreting and the Chartered Institute of Linguists: 'Editing, Indexing and Translating – the added-value activities behind publishing'

2015   New SfEP membership structure in place (Entry-level, Intermediate, Professional, Advanced Professional)
Memorandum and Articles of Association, and by-laws, revised

2015   S1 58th birthday – SfEP 27th birthday
First joint conference held at University of York, 5–7 September
Judith Butcher, SfEP President since 1989, dies on 6 October and tributes flood in

Five ~~exhausted~~ happy workers are we: the 2015 SfEP/SI conference team are Ruth Durbridge, Jody Ineson, Ann Kingdom (acting conference director, SI), Sarah Perkins, Christine Vaughan (conference director, SfEP)

Selective timeline compiled by Ruth Durbridge, with assistance from Ann Kingdom. Thank you to all contributors.