An offer we couldn’t refuse

Late in 1995 Rick Swinard, the Editorial Projects Manager at the Herald and Weekly Times, made the State Library an offer we couldn’t refuse. He offered us 45 years of indexes to both the Herald and the Sun newspapers, with close to 20 years of the Australasian, and later the Australasian Post, thrown in.

From the first signs of the great depression in the 1920s, through the war years, the baby boomer fifties, to the anti Vietnam war marches of 1970, the staff of the Herald and Weekly Times Library covered it all. Sometimes they typed their entries, but mostly they were hand written, in pen and ballpoint, sometimes in red, on both sides of large cards (12.5 x 20 cm) of different colours: orange for bylines, blue for personal names, white for subjects. In all they created close to a quarter of a million cards.

For years these must have been an invaluable research tool for journalists and library staff alike, but by 1995 they had outlived their usefulness. When the Herald and Weekly Times were planning to move from their Flinders Street building, State Library staff were thrilled to be shown up a steep staircase to a dusty loft area, filled with 90 wooden drawers, plus several shoe boxes, of index cards. That’s over 30 metres of indexing, much of it covering years for which there was no published index to a Melbourne newspaper (the Argus index ceased in 1949).

With the State Library’s redevelopment program came more space for La Trobe reference services and the opportunity to make these indexes available to researchers of all kinds. The indexes have been rehoused in new metal cabinets in the La Trobe Information Centre.

These indexes cover:

Australasian/Australasian Post:
January 1937-December 1947;
January 1950-December 1957

Herald:
January 1926-12 November 1970

Sun:
January 1929-2 November 1970

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