
British Standard Recommendations for

**Preparing indexes to books, periodicals
and other documents**

Récommandations pour la préparation des indexes des livres, périodiques et d'autres documents

Empfehlungen für die Anfertigung von Registern für Bücher, Zeitschriften und anderer Dokumente

Foreword

This British Standard has been prepared under the direction of the Documentation Standards Committee. It supersedes BS 3700 : 1976, which is withdrawn.

This standard is concerned with basic indexing principles and practice rather than with the detailed procedure of indexing, which varies according to the type of matter indexed and the users for whom the index is intended.

This new edition updates, clarifies and exemplifies the basic indexing methods recommended in the previous edition, from which it differs in the following respects:

- (a) it takes into account changes made in the revision of BS 1749 published in 1985;
- (b) it emphasizes the necessity for quality and user requirement considerations;
- (c) it takes into account non-book media;
- (d) it gives fuller guidance on the practices of printers and publishers as these affect the presentation of an index;
- (e) it appends recommendations on assigned keywords in an indexing context.

Although this British Standard does not give any guidance on computer-generated systems as such, it offers advice for any indexing task regardless of whether the method used is manual or computer-assisted.

Some examples from the *Current Technology Index* have been included with the kind permission of Library Association Publishing Ltd.

The examples given are illustrative, not prescriptive, as the nature of any document indexed determines the choice and form of entries.

This British Standard is related to ISO 999-1975 'Documentation — Index of a publication', but is not equivalent in technical content. ISO 999 is currently under extensive revision by Technical Committee 46, Documentation, of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), in which the United Kingdom participates.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Contents

	Page
Foreword	Inside front cover
Committees responsible	Back cover
Recommendations	
1 Scope	2
2 Definitions	2
3 Function of an index	2
4 Types and features of indexes	2
5 Content and general organization	3
6 Arrangement of entries in indexes	9
7 Presentation	10
Appendix	
A Assigned keywords	13
Alphabetical index	14

Recommendations

1 Scope

This British Standard makes recommendations on the content, organization and presentation of indexes. It applies to indexes of books, periodicals, reports and other documents in any medium, such as films, sound recordings, diagrams, maps and three-dimensional objects. It is relevant to all such indexes, whether manually produced or computer-assisted, and whether compiled by one indexer or several indexers.

It covers the choice, form and arrangement of headings and subheadings used in index entries, and assigned keywords, once the subjects to be indexed have been determined. (For the examination of documents and the selection of subjects for indexing see BS 6529. For the compilation of a monolingual thesaurus that may assist in the selection of index terms see BS 5723.)

The standard does not make recommendations for the compilation of catalogues for libraries, museums and other collections, or for bibliographic references. (For bibliographic references see BS 1629.) It does not cover the mechanized sorting of text words to generate indexes, nor does it cover individual systems of indexing such as PRECIS, chain indexing or the techniques of post-coordinate indexing, although its recommendations may be relevant to any of these systems.

NOTE. The publications referred to in this standard are listed on the inside back cover.

2 Definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the definitions given in BS 5408 apply together with the following.

- 2.1 cross-reference.** A direction from one heading or subheading to another.
- 2.2 document.** Any item that presents information.
- 2.3 entry.** A single record in an index, consisting of a heading followed by a location reference or by a 'see' cross-reference.
- 2.4 heading.** A term chosen to represent in the index an item or concept in a document.
- 2.5 index.** A systematic arrangement of entries designed to enable users to locate information in a document.
- 2.6 keyword.** A significant term selected from a document or from a controlled list of terms to denote a major concept that appears in the document.
- 2.7 location reference.** An indication, following the heading or subheading, of that part of a document or collection of documents to which the heading or subheading refers.
- 2.8 main heading.** A heading used alone or under which related or modifying terms are subsumed to form a hierarchy.

2.9 'see also' cross-reference. A direction from a heading or subheading that is followed by a location reference to another heading, or headings, under which related information will be found.

2.10 'see' cross-reference. A direction from a heading or subheading not followed by a location reference, to another heading that is followed by a location reference.

2.11 subheading. A heading that is subsumed under a main heading to indicate a subordinate or qualifying relationship.

2.12 term. A word, phrase or symbol used to denote a concept.

2.13 thesaurus. A list of preferred terms for indexing and locating documents and concepts within documents.

NOTE. Most thesauri also contain cross-references from non-preferred terms to preferred terms and indicate relationships between terms.

3 Function of an index

The function of an index is to provide the user with an efficient means of tracing information. The indexer should therefore carry out the following.

- (a) *Identify* and *locate* relevant information within the material being indexed.
- (b) *Discriminate* between information on a subject and passing mention of a subject.
- (c) *Exclude* passing mention of subjects that offers nothing significant to the potential user.
- (d) *Analyse* concepts treated in the document so as to produce a series of headings based on its terminology.
- (e) *Indicate* relationships between concepts.
- (f) *Group together* information on subjects that is scattered by the arrangement of the document.
- (g) *Synthesize* headings and subheadings into entries.
- (h) *Direct* the user seeking information under terms not chosen for the index headings to the headings that have been chosen, by means of cross-references.
- (i) *Arrange* entries into a systematic and helpful order.

4 Types and features of indexes

4.1 General

An index may be produced with the document that has been indexed, or separately (see 7.2). Indexes may include entries for a range of categories including names (personal, corporate, geographical), technical terms, subjects, titles of works, first lines (of poems, etc.), quotations, abbreviations, acronyms, numbers and dates. Different types of index entry may be combined in one sequence.