

ABBREVIATIONS

An abbreviation is a shortened or contracted form of a word or a phrase, used to represent the whole. Abbreviations appear in three different forms, namely, as *truncations*, *initialisms*, and *acronyms*.

Typical *truncations* are "Bull." for Bulletin, "Proc." for Proceedings, "Tr." or "Trans." for Transactions, "Govt." for Government, "Dept." for Department, and so on. They are always to be treated exactly as written and not "as if" spelled out in full.

An *initialism* is a set of initials representing parts of a name, with each letter pronounced separately (mostly because of a lack of vowels which could make the initialism pronounceable). Typical initialisms are BBC for British Broadcasting Corporation, DDT for dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, and NFL for National Football League. Sometimes, nicknames may develop from otherwise unpronounceable initialisms: FNMA (Federal National Mortgage Association) is fondly known in financial circles as "Fanny Mae".

An *acronym* is a name formed from the initial letters or groups of letters or words in a name or phrase. It is intended to be pronounceable and may, in the course of time, become a word or proper name in its own right, e.g., *radar* (originally an acronym for *radio detecting and ranging*) or *Unesco*, which underwent a metamorphosis from U.N.E.S.C.O. to UNESCO to Unesco, standing for *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*; in this case, the organization itself decided to change its acronym to a proper name.

All abbreviations pose three problems in indexing: (a) when should they be used as main headings (and sometimes as subheadings)?, (b) how should they be punctuated?, and (c) where and how should they be alphabetized? The answer to (a) depends on several factors. Using an abbreviated form of a name or phrase will save space, particularly if the heading is followed by more than a few locators as well as by subheadings. For the latter, initialisms or acronyms are often preferable because of their brevity. In the following example, the spelled-out subheadings require turnover lines and the entry takes up seven lines, whereas the abbreviated sub-

headings result in an entry of only four lines and no turnover lines, which is easier to read.

Abbreviations as subheadings

indexing standards

ANSI 13, 56

BSI 15, 27, 56

ISO 16

Subheadings spelled out

indexing standards

American National

Standards Institute 13, 56

British Standards

Institution 15, 27, 56

International Organization

for Standardization 16

Initialisms or acronyms may, however, be used in this manner only if they are expected to be well known to the users of the index, and a cross-reference from the full form of the name of an organization, project, material, etc. must be made in the index even if the full form is not given in the text. For initialisms or acronyms which are not widely known, or which may have been specifically invented by an author, it is preferable to index the full form, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. A cross-reference from the abbreviation to the full form must be made if the full form is followed by many locators or by one or more subheadings. If the full form has only a few locators, say, no more than three, it is better to make **DOUBLE ENTRIES**, which may save two or even three lines, especially if the full form of an organization's name, for example, is rather long; it will also save the user's time, because no secondary lookup of a *see* reference will be necessary:

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

Administration (UNRRA) 112, 120

⋮

UNRRA 112, 120

not

UNRRA *see* United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

Administration

Problem (b), **PUNCTUATION**, depends on the usage of the text. Most initialisms and all acronyms are now written without periods, but if periods are used in the text (as in the U.N.E.S.C.O. example

above), they should also be written in the index. If usage varies and both punctuated and unpunctuated forms are found in the text, e.g., in a periodical, the most prevalent or the latest form (Unesco in the example) should be used, with cross-references to other forms if necessary.

The answer to problem (c), alphabetizing of initialisms and acronyms, has been the subject of heated debates. The relevant rules have changed more than once during the past few decades, to the utter confusion of indexers and index users alike. Fortunately, the solution has now become very simple and straightforward: all arrangement rules and indexing standards published since 1980 by national and international organizations and national libraries in the English-speaking world prescribe that the initialisms and acronyms be alphabetized exactly as written, and that any punctuation be disregarded; that is, they file as simple words. The only exceptions to this are initialisms or acronyms written as strings of letters separated by spaces, e.g., A B C, which makes each *letter* a "word"; such a heading may, however, only be used as a cross-reference, never as a main heading, as shown in the example below. These rules invalidate all older and often very complex and inconsistent rules regarding the alphabetizing of initialisms and acronyms, such as to group them before any other word or name beginning with the same letter, or to arrange them "as if spelled out".

Admittedly, the impetus for the formulation of the new and simple rules came from attempts to make alphabetization of index entries of all kinds amenable to automation, thereby eliminating the tedious and highly error-prone task of shuffling and reshuffling cards or slips, and reducing human intervention in alphabetizing to an absolute minimum. But it was also realized that the old rule "arrange abbreviations as if spelled out", though sounding quite simple, was in fact shot through with inconsistencies, contradictions, and problems of a linguistic nature. Thus, while *Mr.* is indeed uniformly spelled and pronounced (aloud or silently) as "Mister", such is not the case for a wife as *Mrs.*, never pronounced or arranged as "Mistress". (One of the many exceptions in the old ALA rules [ALA 1968] was an instruction to arrange *Mrs.* "as written", that is, exactly what the present rules say.) Going from *Mr.* and *Mrs.* to their liberated daughter *Ms.*, one wonders what the old-timers would have done with it had it already been invented in their time.

And what about *Dr.*, which may be spelled as Doctor, Docteur, Doktor, Dottore, etc. (e.g., in the many translations of *Dr. Zhivago*)? *St.* may be spelled out variously as Saint, Sainte, Sankt, Santa, Santo, etc. even in a strictly English index if names of places or churches in different countries are involved. To make matters a little bit more complicated, certain abbreviations widely used in scholarly writings date back to a time when every educated person knew Latin, but they are now "pronounced" (again, aloud or silently) in their English translation: e.g. [*exempli gratia*] is read as "for example", not "ee jee"; i.e. [*id est*] is read as "that is"; and there are a number of other such Latin abbreviations read not as written but as translated. Although they may not often be index entries, they might have to be indexed in an English grammar or style manual. In this instance, the old rule "arrange as if spelled out" breaks down altogether. -

Even the *Chicago manual of style* (1993, 17.92, 17.107) has at long last come around to prefer alphabetization of abbreviations as written, though it still permits to arrange the abbreviation "St." occurring in personal and place names as if spelled out.

The following example shows the arrangement of abbreviations and acronyms according to the post-1980 rules, all of which prescribe or prefer word-by-word arrangement:

A B C <i>see</i> A.B.C.	No and yes
Aarhus	<i>No, Fernando</i>
Abacus	<i>Number 10, Downing Street</i>
A.B.C.	Number line
Abdera	R. Accademia
Cmdr. Smith	filarmonica
CO ₂ lasers	RCA-Victor
<i>Commander Brown</i>	Regia Galleria di Firenze
<i>Doctor Who</i>	Sailors
Doktor, William	Saint, P. K.
<i>Doktor Faustus</i>	Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin
<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>	San Francisco
<i>M. Flip ignorait sa mort</i>	Sankhya
Marine Maritime	<i>Short Title</i>
Academy (M.M.A.)	<i>Catalogue (STC)</i>
M'Bow, A. P.	SS. Pietro e Paolo
<i>Mister Abbott</i>	SS (Schutzstaffel)

<i>Mistress Anne</i>	St. Louis
<i>Mlle. Henriette</i>	St. Moritz
M.M.A. <i>see</i> Marine	STC <i>see</i> <i>Short Title</i>
Maritime Academy	<i>Catalogue</i>
<i>Mme. Pompadour</i>	Ste. Geneviève Co.
Modern Poetry	Stearin
Association (M.P.A.)	x rays
Mons veneris	Xmas
<i>Monsieur Verdoux</i>	Yemen
M.P.A. <i>see</i> Modern	Y.M.C.A.
Poetry Association	Yuan
<i>Mr. Adams</i>	YWCA
<i>Mrs. Miniver</i>	Zambia
Ms.	z.B.
<i>M'sieu Gustave</i>	Zn
No. 10, Downing Street	zoos

ALA: 3

BL: 2.4

BS 1749: 5.3

BS 3700: 5.2.1.3; 6.2.1.5; 7.1.4.3

Chicago manual of style: 14.1–57; 17.90

ISO 999: 7.3.6

LC: 10

NISO Z39.4:

ADJECTIVES

Virtually all textbooks and standards agree that an adjective *standing alone* should not be used as a main heading.

*Not this**But this*

optical
illusions 74
rotation 36

optical illusions 74
optical rotation 36

Adjectival nouns, however, may be used as headings:

food
 additives 15
 colors 23
 preservatives 47

This entry could also (and with one line less) be displayed as

food additives 15
 food colors 23
 food preservatives 47

but the indented subheadings in the first example are more easily scanned than the three headings in the second one, because the eye must "jump", as it were, across the first word to find the distinguishing part of the heading. This applies to printed pages as well as (or perhaps even more) to screen displays.

On the question of whether or not to invert headings consisting of an adjective and a noun, *see* COMPOUND HEADINGS.

ADVERBS

Adverbs should not be used as headings, except in those rare instances when they happen to be the first word of a set phrase used as a term, e.g., "Very high frequency band". Adverbs may, of course, also form the initial word in entries of title indexes, in first-line indexes of POETRY, and in indexes to linguistic texts in which adverbs are treated as topics.

ALPHANUMERIC ARRANGEMENT

No other issue in librarianship and indexing has evoked more heated debates, has been bedevilled by more arcane and silly rules,

has been the target of more well-deserved satire* and ridicule, or has frustrated users more than the arrangement of headings in catalogs and indexes. Before 1980, filing rules were not based on the sequence of letters in the Roman alphabet alone but contained dozens of complex and sometimes contradictory rules intended to file certain words or groups of words and letters by their *meaning* rather than by their graphic representation and to arrange abbreviations and numbers as they were *pronounced*, not as they were written. All of this needed not only special rules but also dozens of exceptions which human filers were expected to remember unflinchingly, though most of these unfortunate clerks neither did their job correctly nor understood what they were doing and why. The rules were, however, not designed in order to fool the "enemy"—the users of alphabetic files—but out of an earnest and sincere desire to make entries in catalogs and indexes easier to find. Alas, though, they had the opposite effect. The plethora of special rules and exceptions resulted in such confusion that even trained librarians and indexers were often unable to make sense of an alphabetical arrangement, while the general public was baffled and exasperated, because more often than not people could not find what they were looking for, especially in card catalogs in which only one entry at a time could be seen.

When it became obvious that the tedious task of alphabetizing could be performed by computers which were admirably suited for repetitive operations following strict and logical rules, it turned out that the arcane exceptions and special provisions of the arrangement rules, stipulating, for example, that certain words should be arranged "as if" transposed to a different place in a heading or even "as if" they did not exist at all, could not be translated into programs that computers could execute.

Rules and Standards

Partly because of the need for computer-compatible arrangement and partly because of the even more urgent need for simplification of the rules, by 1980 all national arrangement rules and standards

*One of the funniest is Herbert H. Hoffman's "How the indefatigable

H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N got filed by the foiling rules" (1976).

in the English-speaking world had been thoroughly revised and streamlined. For example, the *ALA rules for filing catalog cards* of 1968 contained 37 main rules, having from three to a dozen or more subrules and filling 260 pages; they were stripped down in the *ALA filing rules* of 1980, a slim 50-page pamphlet, to only 10 main rules and a few subrules, only seven or eight of which are sufficient for most alphabetizing purposes.

All alphanumeric arrangement rules and standards issued after 1980, namely, *ALA filing rules* (ALA), *BLAISE filing rules* (BL), BS 1749:1985 *Alphabetical arrangement . . .*, the *Library of Congress filing rules* (LC), and both the international standard ISO 999 and the American standard NISO Z39.4 on indexing (which contain rules for alphabetical arrangement) consider only the graphic representation of symbols, numbers, and words, but not their meaning or pronunciation. A new NISO standard, *Alphabetical arrangement of letters, and the sorting order of numerals and other symbols*, which is currently being developed, will be based on the same principles.

In alphabetical files kept in the form of cards (which are now rapidly disappearing from the scene) the old rules are often still being followed because of the impossibility of rearranging tens of thousands or millions of cards according to the current rules. But that is fortunately not the case for indexes to books which ought to be arranged by the current rules. Regarding indexes to *PERIODICALS*, these too need not be arranged by the old rules for the sake of continuity, but can be arranged by the current rules, beginning with a new volume.

Since 1980, when the current alphanumerical arrangement rules were published, they have proven their effectiveness. Indexers should firmly insist on the exclusive application of these rules, not only because they enable a computer to relieve an indexer from the tedious and error-prone task of alphanumerical arrangement but also, and most importantly, to make it possible for users of an index to find what they are looking for quickly and easily.

At this point, the reader may well ask: why bother about arrangement rules, old or new? Are not word processors equipped with sorting programs which will automatically put all headings in their correct alphabetic place? The answer to this is, unfortunately, no.

Commonly used all-purpose software, sorting headings by ASCII* codes, will not produce alphabetic sequences suitable for indexing and may actually wreak havoc with index entries.

This may happen because a term enclosed in quotation marks (either single or double) will precede all numerically or alphabetically sorted terms; hyphens and commas will sort after spaces; and all terms beginning with a capital letter will be arranged before those beginning with lowercase letters. The result would be the following sequence of headings:

"hyperion" (Keats)
1066 and all that
Alabama
Mainland
Zoological Society
alabaster
mainland
mean time
mean, arithmetic
sick leave
sick-berth
zoology

Only sorting software specially designed for indexing will produce properly arranged entries, and, even then, human intervention may sometimes be necessary to "nudge" headings into their correct alphanumeric position by formatting them in a special way, e.g., names of chemical compounds (discussed below).

Terminology

Filing, the most general, and formerly the most widely understood, term still graces the titles of several current standards and codes of practice for alphanumeric arrangement. Unfortunately, it has become ambiguous, because the term "file" is being used in the context of data processing in an entirely different sense; it is therefore no longer suitable and has been largely replaced by *alphanumeric*

*For an explanation of ASCII see p. 460.