THE REPORT

1. AIMS AND PURPOSES

This standard provides basic criteria for indexing books, periodicals, and other documentary materials. It includes a definition of an index, and standards covering the nature, organization, and style of an index, as well as certain observations about indexing procedures generally and the value of an index.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Definition of an Index – Within the fields of library practice and documentation, an index is a guide to the contents of any reading matter or other documentary materials, which provides a systematic, sustained subject analysis of the contents of such materials arranged according to alphabetical, chronological, numerical, or other chosen order. Each entry is followed by page number, paragraph number, or other indicator showing the exact location of the reference.

2.2 Glossary of key terms used in the definition –
Entry – Any single item in the index referring to a specific place in the text and indicating the nature of the material to be found there.
Subject – The basic former concept, derived from the material indexed, which constitutes a unit in the established system of classification, whether a thematic topic, a name, a date, the first line of a poem, the title of a work, etc.

Sustained – Comprising the entire work to be indexed, from beginning to end, and using the same method of indexing consistently for all its parts.

Systematic – Using a logical, consistent method of dividing the material indexed and grouping the resulting entries.

2.3. What an Index is Not – An index is not a concordance, a table of contents, a mere list of words not in subject entry form, a glossary, a checklist, a history or background analysis of an action arranged chronologically.

3. NATURE AND VARIETY OF INDEXES

3.1. The nature of an index is determined by the subject content of the material to be indexed, and by the use to which the index is to be put. Hence, the qualifications and purposes of the prospective readership must be taken into account.

3.2. Indexes are applicable to single works, whether monographic or encyclopedic, in one or more volumes, and to multiple related works. The most common types of material indexed are: (a) single books, (b) multiple issues of a single periodical or newspaper, (c) single issues of multiple periodicals, (d) encyclopedias, (e) collections and miscellaneous groups of publications or other documentary materials.

3.3. Indexes to these different types of materials vary not only in their organization and format but also in the extent to which the analysis of the content is carried out. An index to a single book of two hundred pages, for example, may be far more detailed than an index to a group of periodicals comprising three hundred separate articles for a total of two thousand pages.

3.4. The scope of an index is necessarily determined also by such practical considerations as (a) amount of space available, (b) cost of publication, (c) publication deadlines, and (d) size and quality of the indexing staff.

3.5. Indexes may be appended to the work indexed and published within it; they may be published as separate volumes; or they may be issued in card form or otherwise.

4. CONTENT, ORGANIZATION AND STYLE

4.1. General

4.1.1. Indexes should cover all material in the work indexed, including significant material in forewords, prefaces, introductions, footnotes and appendixes. An index may supply information implicit but not actually found in the text, such as full names, identifying dates, etc., provided that such additions serve only for clarification and fall strictly within the scope and intent of the work indexed. Indexes need not cover the title page, dedications, the table of contents, detailed chapter analyses at the beginning of each chapter, and the bibliography, although a note in the index referring to the bibliography and
stating that chapter analyses may be found in the work will be helpful. If the work includes advertising matter of reference value, this should be indexed. Separate indexes to advertising and text material are advisable.

4.1.2. Indexes should be organized according to a logical, balanced, consistent and easily recognizable pattern. A note explaining the pattern and calling attention to necessary deviations, if any, should be present whenever it is thought useful. Such notes should appear at the beginning of the index and also, if warranted, at major subject headings.

4.2. Entries (Headings and Sub-Headings).

(In its simplest form, an entry consists of a single, concise item derived from the text and the reference to its location there. In more complex indexes, an entry may have several sub-entries or modifiers (e.g. Shakespeare, early years 4–6; education 5,6), or several entries pertaining to the same subject may be grouped under a heading encompassing all, which may, in turn, be divided into several subheadings. The difference in method is outwardly one of typographical arrangement; the choice should be determined by the complexity of the material and the minuteness with which it is indexed.)

4.2.1. The subject form of entries should be derived from the text indexed; and the terminology, once established, must be followed consistently. Through the use of “see” references provision should be made for synonymous terms (e.g. Aeronautics – Aviation), for popular as against scientific or technical terms (e.g. Heart Attack – Coronary Thrombosis), for terms well-known as abbreviations (e.g. AFL-CIO), and for obsolete as against current terms (e.g. Flying Saucers – Unidentified Flying Objects). These “see” references should be used from the time when a given term comes into general usage until it has lost all popular currency.

4.2.2. Main headings should be as specific as possible, depending on the amount of material under them. Separate subheadings should be established for each aspect of a given subject if feasible, and must be established whenever the number of references in any one subentry exceeds four. Subheadings under a given main heading should form a consistent pattern and should all be on the same level of classification (e.g. if under a main heading Steel Industry a subheading Labor Relations is used, then Strikes should not also be used as a parallel subheading, since it is in fact subsidiary to the other). For this reason, also, the Subcommittee suggests that subject subheadings and geographical subheadings not both be used under the same heading on the same level of classification. (For example: If under the heading Education, both Canada and Elementary appear as parallel subheadings, the reader will not know whether entries on elementary schools in Canada will be found under Education–Canada or under Education–Elementary. To avoid this, use Education–Canada with Elementary as a further subdivision, or use Education–Elementary with Canada and other geographic entities as further subdivisions.) When headings have many subheadings and subentries, a note explaining the structure and listing the subheadings is often helpful.

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4.2.3. The first page reference under a given heading should be to the first introduction of the subject in the text, even if that is not necessarily the main reference.

4.3. Alphabetizing (Filing)

4.3.1. Standards are recommended here for the principal aspects of alphabetizing and filing. However, the American Library Association Rules for Filing Catalog Cards (1941) and the Library of Congress Filing Rules (1956) should be consulted for additional guidance.

4.3.2. In alphabetically arranged indexes, a single alphabet should be used in most cases. (A likely exception would be an anthology of poetry, in which separate alphabets for authors, titles, and first lines may be advisable.)

4.3.3. Subheadings and subentries should appear in alphabetical order, not in the order in which pertinent material appears in the text. However, subentries denoting historical periods should be filed chronologically (17th Century before 18th Century).

4.3.4. The word-by-word method of alphabetizing (New York before Newark) should be used rather than the letter-by-letter method. The subcommittee recognizes that the latter method is widely used, and suggests that a note stating which method is used should be included in the index.

4.3.5. Certain deviations from the strict alphabetical order may be made when it seems reasonable to do so (Henry II filed before Henry V).

4.3.6. Under authors’ names, “by” entries should be filed before “about” entries.

4.3.7. Where the same word denotes both a subject and a personal name, filing should be – person, place, thing.

4.3.8. “See” references should be filed in normal alphabetical order.

4.3.9. “See also” references should be filed in normal alphabetical order before all entries except when they pertain not to the given heading or subheading as a whole but to only one specific entry under it, in which case they should follow that entry. Although there is a difference of opinion on this point, this standard is based on the consideration that the user of an index is told immediately in the heading what material is not to be found under it.

4.3.10. Abbreviations should be filed as if spelled out (St. Louis as Saint Louis), except (a) when the words abbreviated are not known (e.g. C. I. T. Financial Corp.) and (b) when abbreviations are used as headings for “see” references to the corresponding terms spelled out (e.g. ICC see Interstate Commerce Commission). Abbreviations should be filed preferably at the beginning of the letter; however, if they are filed as words, a note of explanation should be carried.

4.3.11. Elisions should be filed as printed, ignoring punctuation (e.g. Who’s Who is filed though spelled Whos Who).

4.3.12. Hyphenated words should be filed as though two separate words,
except such words as cooperation, antitrust, postwar, which have become single words through usage.

4.3.13. Numbers should be filed as if spelled out, except as noted in 4.3.3.

4.3.14. Geographic entities having the same name should be filed in strict alphabetical order (e.g. New York City,-County,-Port,-State). Gazetteer-type filing (by size and location, and political feature before geographic feature) should be used only where gazetteer-type information is given in the index.

4.3.15. Where both subject and geographical subheadings are used, a single alphabet for both is preferred.

4.4. Inversions – The problem of inverting certain headings to key terms (e.g. National Education Association to Education Association, National), was discussed and the Subcommittee concluded that the problem of setting comprehensive, universally valid rules is not within its prerogative. It was agreed generally that the use of inversions should be governed by the type of material indexed (does the author always give the full, legal names of all companies, associations, and the like?) and by the character of the prospective readership (will the reader look under Teamsters Union or under International Brotherhood of . . . ?) The index should contain a note explaining in detail whether inversions are used, what headings are inverted, and how the inversions are run. “See” references from uninvited headings and from alternate inversions to the inverted headings should be used extensively.

4.5. References

4.5.1. References should be as precise as possible. When a reference is made to more than two consecutive pages, the first and last pages should be given rather than the first page only, supplemented by “ff” (pp 3–8 rather than 3ff).

4.5.2. Indexes to a periodical or to a variety of periodicals should indicate the length of an article by giving inclusive pages.

4.5.3. Depending on the type of work indexed, it may be very useful to show in the entries in the index whether a given reference includes illustrations, maps or graphs, or whether it guides the reader to a direct quotation. If abbreviations are used in giving such information, a key to abbreviations should be given at the beginning of the index. A note informing the reader that such special information is available should also be given there.

4.5.4. If a series of references is given for a single item, the reference leading to the fullest information on that subject should be made distinct from the rest through some typographical device such as bold-face type.

4.6. Typography

4.6.1. The type face in an index should be in harmony with that used in the text. Its size may be, and usually is, smaller, but should not be smaller than 6 point size of a fairly legible face. Variations in the type through the use of bold face, italics, and capitals are desirable.

4.6.2. The number of columns per page depends on the type of material in the index, especially the length of entry lines and on the page dimensions.
4.6.3. Indentations should be designed so that headings, subheadings, entries, and page references can be located easily on the page. Progressive left-to-right indentation seems to be most successful with page reference run on. For example:

Main heading
Sub-heading
Entry
Shakespeare
Works About
Chute, M, Shakespeare of London 10

In listings such as those of first lines of poetry the first line of each item should be set flush left and run-over lines indented, care being taken that such indented run-overs are not to be confused with indented subheadings. Indentations obviate the need for repeating headings. Where indentations are not so used, headings should be repeated rather than be replaced by dashes if the size of the index warrants.

4.6.4. Single line entries are preferred to run-in (paragraph) entries. However, in complex indexes entries under the lowest-level subdivision may be run together. When entries are run together, they should be in alphabetical order, not in the order in which the material appears in the text (for example, in the index to a biography of Shakespeare – Works the plays should be listed in alphabetical order, not in the order in which they are discussed in the text). If the material in the text is arranged chronologically (for example, a chronology of the discussion of the United Nations Disarmament Subcommittee), then paragraphed entries in the index should also be in chronological order.

4.6.5. "Continued" lines should be used whenever an entry breaks from one column to another with headings repeated. The abbreviation "cont." is suggested.

4.7. Cross-references – Cross-references should be considered as substitutes for but equivalent to duplicate entries. They should be devised carefully and used generously. However, when a cross-reference leads only to a single entry, a duplicate entry should be used giving exact reference.

5. FURTHER GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

5.1. Since indexes are of great value to all types of research, indexers, should be given proper credit for their contribution. It is suggested that indexers be given credit by name in the publication indexed, and that book reviewers be persuaded to comment on indexes in their reviews.

5.2. Since objective analysis of the text is the basic requirement for a good index, it is generally advisable that the index be devised by a qualified person other than the author. The author can be of great help to the indexer in the analysis of the text, the selection of subject headings, etc.; but the author should beware of the tendency to impose on the index his own biases or his own vocabulary.