
The terms are arranged by a two-digit serial number following the number for the part, e.g. 05.13, designating fog level. Some definitions have examples and/or illustrations. An alphabetical index of terms refers to the relevant serial numbers.


This part of BS 5261 supersedes BS 1219: 1958 and BS 1219M: 1961. The marks specified are, however, compatible with those specified in BS 5261: Part 2. Appendices show marked-up copy and corrected proofs and also a list of characters and symbols so similar in form that they may be confused.


This standard lists, names and describes the numeric tags used in identifying elements used in interloan transactions. An alphabetical index refers from named elements to the tags. Further explanations and examples of use are given.


A biblid is defined as 'a code composed of alphanumeric and special characters displayed in standardized eye-readable form on every contribution in serials and in books containing separate works by different authors. The word is itself used as a code identifier, as, for example, to designate an article in a serial:

BIBLID 0272-1716(1983)3:3p.68-70

That biblid shows the code designation, followed by the ISSN of the serial, year of publication, volume and part number of the serial, and pagination of the designated article.

Recommendations for preparing indexes to books, periodicals and other documents. (BS 3700: 1988) has already been noticed in this journal. (The Indexer 16 (1) 1988, 42-4 and 16 (3) 1989, 217.) It has been adopted as the basis for a forthcoming international standard.

Swift on indexing

In the course of his Letter of Advice to a Young Poet (a satirical essay first published in 1721) Jonathan Swift makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to indexes as a useful short cut to knowledge of the classical writers, which might otherwise cost the aspiring bard much laborious study. Unlike the work quoted by G. Norman Knight in his chapter on 'Humour in Indexing,* this essay appears to be a genuine work of Swift's and certainly demonstrates his capacity for sustained irony. The passage deserves quoting in extenso:

Possibly you may think it a very severe Task, to arrive at a competent Knowledge of so many of the Antients, as excel in their Way; and indeed it would be really so, but for the short and easy Method lately found out of Abstracts, Abridgments, Summaries, &c. which are admirable Expedients for being very learned with little or no Reading; and have the same Use with Burning-Glasses, to collect the diffus’d Rays of Wit and Learning in Authors, and make them point with Warmth and Quickness upon the Reader’s Imagination. And to this is nearly related that other modern Device of consulting Indexes, which is to read Books Hebraically, and begin where others usually end; and this is a compendious Way of coming to an acquaintance with Authors: For authors are to be used like Lobsters, you must look for the best meat in the Tails, and lay the Bodies back again in the Dish. Your cunningest Thieves (and what else are Readers who only read to borrow, i.e. to steal) use to cut off the Portmanteau from behind, without staying to dive into the Pockets of the owner. Lastly, you are taught thus much in the very Elements of Philosophy, for one of the first rules in Logick is, Finis est primus in intentione.

The learned World is therefore most highly indebted to a late painful and judicious Editor of the Classicks, who has laboured in that new Way with exceeding Felicity. Every Author, by his Management, sweats under himself, being over-loaded with his own Index, and carries, like a North-Country Pedlar, all his substance and Furniture upon his Back, and with as great Variety of Trifles. To him let all young Students make their Compliments for so much Time and Pains sav’d in the Pursuit of useful Knowledge; for whoever shortens a Road is a Benefactor to the Publick, and to every particular Person who has Occasion to travel that Way.

What Swift would have thought—and, perhaps even more, what he might have written—about our own Age of Instant Information scarcely bears considering.

John A. Vickers

*Knight, G. Norman. Indexing, the art of. Allen & Unwin, 1979. 184, n.3.