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## Standardizing standards

Standards for document citation and identification were discussed by Maeve O'Connor in two articles in *European Science Editing* no. 47 Sept. 1992.

The first, 'With reference to references' (p. 4-6), highlighted the need for uniformity in giving bibliographical references (citations) in journals. Several different styles are currently in use in the medico/scientific field, exhibiting variations in punctuation, inclusion of article titles, form of page numbers, inversion of authors' names and initials, number of authors named, typefaces, abbreviated forms, and order of elements. One principal difference is in the position of the date: in some styles it is placed immediately after the author's name, in others after the title of the journal, and in others at the end of the citation. Citations in reference lists at the end of texts are given in either name-date order or citation-order sequence with each citation having been numbered in the text. A format for reference lists that both kinds of system can adopt is recommended. Examples are given of styles according to: IUB-CEBJ (International Union of Biochemistry's Commission of Editors of Biochemical Journals); ELSE-CIBA Foundation (ELSE = European Life Science Editors, now European Association of Science Editors); Vancouver style (International Steering Committee of Medical Editors, now the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors); CBE/ANSI (Council of Biology Editors and the American National Standards Institute); International Organization for Standardization (ISO 690: 1987); British Standards 1629: 1989 and 5605: 1990; and a possible solution—modified CBE-ELSE-Vancouver. O'Connor hopes that

editors will eventually agree on the modified style for reference lists, whichever method they require for citations in the text. Agreement on uniformity in reference style would bring nearer the even more important goal of correct citation (i.e. citing papers that really do contain the evidence they are said to contain and providing correct bibliographical information).

The second item, 'Standards for books, journals and reports' (p. 17), summarizes some recommendations of the May 1992 meeting of Subcommittee 9 of Technical Committee 46 (Information and Documentation) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO/TC46/SC9). Of particular interest is the recommendation that the standard for establishment of ISRNs (International standard technical report numbers) should be submitted to ISO for publication. ISRNs will be to technical reports what ISBNs and ISSNs are to books and periodicals, i.e. each one will uniquely identify a particular document. The standard for ISSNs is also being revised and will recommend that a different ISSN be assigned to each version of a serial published on a different medium (so the print edition of a journal will have a different ISSN from the CD-ROM edition). Some other (existing) documentary standards were given their five-yearly reviews and confirmed: the standard on references (ISO 690: 1987) was thought likely to need revision before the end of the next five years, particularly in the light of work on ISO/CD 10956 *Bibliographic references—Electronic documents or parts thereof*.

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