STANDARDS FOR INDEXES TO LEARNED AND
SCIENTIFIC PERIODICALS

These standards approved by the Council of the Society of Indexers are put forward in an attempt to improve indexes to periodical publications. Addressed mainly to editors and publishers, they outline the minimum requirements for adequate indexes, which are of vital importance to librarians and research workers.

1. The value of any journal is enhanced by an adequate index, and no learned or scientific periodical should be published without this essential feature.

2. Every volume of a journal should be provided with an adequate index. While it may not be possible for each number or part of a journal to contain this feature, these issues should have tables of contents displayed in prominent positions either on the cover (front or back) or in the pages preceding the actual text. An alphabetical list of authors in each issue is most useful.

3. The index to a journal should be issued in or with the final part of the periodical, failing which it should be published as soon as possible after the publication of the final issue. Preferably it should be printed separately, or in a manner permitting ready extraction for binding purposes. It should not be stitched or stapled in such a way that the folds of paper forming an issue must be mutilated in order to extract the index.

4. A dictionary index combining author, subject and title entries may be preferable to separate author and subject indexes, but where separate indexes are provided their functions should be clearly defined at the beginning of each index and at the top of each page.

5. The names of all co-authors should be printed in the index, cross-references only being provided if space is limited.

6. Special features should be indexed under such headings as Book Reviews, Editorials, Obituaries, etc., but the items should also appear under author, title and subject headings. Corrections of printers’ or authors’ errors, additional material in the form of letters, etc., should be noted by page numbers under the appropriate entries.

7. Abbreviations used in the index should be listed at the head of the entries, and any special form of arrangement should be noted, as well as indications of the purpose of any special type (bold or italics) used for page numbers.
8. Articles in journals should be indexed under authors, titles, significant words in titles, and under the subjects dealt with in the text. Some articles may require many entries for subjects, synonyms, and for authorities quoted. There is no reason why entries in bibliographies should be omitted in indexes to journals when they are considered useful in indexes to books.

9. Cumulative indexes are invaluable to librarians, bibliographers and research workers. Certain journals publish an index to the first part of a volume, and cumulate it through the parts until it appears in the final issue as the index to the complete volume. Five-yearly, decennial, or indexes covering longer periods are of vital importance in libraries, and these are usually sold separately. It is appreciated that a cumulative index to a weekly journal might be large and costly, but most libraries would subscribe to all indexes to periodicals in their files.

10. It is useless to provide indexes set in type too small for reading under normal circumstances. 8 point is preferable, but 6 point should be the smallest employed. Adequate spacing and intelligent layout are also necessary to facilitate quick reference to an index.

11. A table of contents, with or without an alphabetical list of authors' names, does not take the place of an index.

12. Indexes should be compiled by competent indexers having some knowledge of the subject being indexed. A journal badly indexed is liable to acquire the reputation of a bad journal.

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