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September meeting:

Shortened forms

Abbreviations was on the list of topics to be discussed at the meeting in June, along with other short topics. When I came to research the topic it grew and grew, so it was decided it deserved its own session. The thing I like about preparing for these sessions is it forces me to go back to basics, consult books and challenge my assumptions and how I index. This was one such topic.

The first thing I realised was what I called abbreviations were technically initialisms. How could I get it so wrong? Aren't lists of these typically headed 'Acronyms and abbreviations'? This is not a good start if I couldn't even get the name of what I wanted to talk about correct! I could see I had a lot of research to do.

Terminology
Back to the basics. What are these things called and what are the differences? The *Style Manual* has a useful summary that clarifies the various shortened forms quoted below (pp 152–4).

Shortened forms can be abbreviations, contractions, acronyms, initialisms or symbols.

Abbreviations consist of first letter of a word, usually some other letters, but not the last letter.	Punctuation: Full stop after abbreviation Capitalisation: Same as unabbreviated word Examples: • para. • Mon. • fig. • tel. • cont. • Co.
Contractions consist of the *first and last letters* of a word and sometimes other letters in between.	Punctuation: No full stops Capitalisation: Same as for uncontracted word Examples: • Mr • Rd • Qld • Cwlth • Pty Ltd • Bros

Acronyms are strings of *initial letters* (and sometimes other letters) *pronounced as a word*.	Punctuation: No full stops Capitalisation: Usually all capitals, but lower case for some familiar ones (with an initial capital if a proper noun). Examples: • TAFE • ASEAN • Anzac • Qantas • AWOL • scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus)
Initialisms are strings of initial letters (and *sometimes* other letters) *not pronounced as a word*.	Punctuation: No full stops Capitalisation: All capitals Examples: • NSW • SBS • PC • TV • CPI
Symbols are internationally recognised representations of units of measurements, words and concepts.	Punctuation: No full stops Capitalisation: Capitals only if symbol represents a proper name Examples: • km • A$ • % • & • @

Why are initialisms referred to as 'abbreviations'? The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines initialisms as 'an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of a sequence of words.' So, initialisms are considered a subset of the category called 'abbreviations' instead of 'shortened forms'.

General tips

- Just because an acronym or initialism is presented in capital letters does not mean that the spelt-out form should have initial capitals. Normal capitalisation practises apply. For example, NSW becomes New South Wales, EIS becomes environmental impact statement and TB becomes tuberculosis.
- Check the preferred full name used in the text. For example, DVD can be digital versatile disc or digital video disc.
- Know the context. For example, AI can be artificial intelligence or artificial insemination.
- Abbreviations end with full stops, contractions don't. This means St is Saint (usually), and St. is Street.
- Don't assume you know what the abbreviation stands for. For example, E St Kilda. I have seen E St. Kilda, East Street Kilda, E Saint Kilda, East Saint Kilda, St Kilda East and Saint Kilda East. There is no Saint 'Kilda' as it was named after a ship and/or the Scottish Island.
- As terminology changes, so too do abbreviations. For example, STD (sexually transmitted diseases) are now referred to as sexually transmitted infections so now STI.

- Check the plural form used in text. For example, it may always be STI in the text even when it could be STIs.
- Units of measures are considered symbols and do not have a plural form. It is km if referring to 1km or 199km.
- Apostrophe are no longer used to indicate missing letters in contracted words that does not contain adjacent repeated letters. For example, Cwlth not C'wlth. An exception is when the contraction contains a repeated letter. For example, A'asia not Aasia (for Australasia).
- While Australia Post likes all capitals for the states and territories the usual forms are ACT, NSW, NT, Qld, SA, Tas., Vic., WA.
- Avoid ampersands unless part of a name. For example, Mills & Boon or Q&A.

Indexing with initialisms

There are four possible options:

1. Use full term
   sexually transmitted infections
   Australian Broadcasting Commission

2. Use full term with initialisms in brackets
   sexually transmitted infections (STI)
   Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC)

3. Use initials
   STI
   ABC

4. Use initials with full term in brackets
   STI (sexually transmitted infections)
   ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission)

The option to use depends on the text and expected readers. Firstly, should you use abbreviations? This advice comes from the *AMA Manual of Style*:

> 'Include only abbreviations used in the text being indexed (ie, if a text uses only an expanded form, e.g. National Institutes of Health, but never the abbreviation, do not include "NIH" in the index).' (*AMA Manual of Style* p 429)

If the text uses a lot of abbreviations, it is likely to have a list of abbreviations. While it is probably fine to assume most readers will know the common abbreviations in their field, I prefer to use option 2, if abbreviation is used in the text.

With time some initialisms become so well known most people would be struggling to know the full version. For example, ASCII or HIV. Some organisations have such long full names it is often more appropriate to use their abbreviation. For example, CSIRO or UNESCO. In other cases, the index provides an educative role and cross-references are encouraged. For example, use of DNA in a high school textbook.

Sometimes things are known by their shortened form and this can influence the main heading for the topic. For example, in medical circles chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is known as COPD hence the main entry needs to be filed under C for chronic. Similarly, traumatic brain injury is known as TBI hence main entry needs to be filed under T. Appropriate cross-references are usually added to guide readers from general topics such as brain injury.

It can be very useful to use shortened forms in subheadings. It may be appropriate to explain this use in the introduction to the index. For example, using the initials of key people in biographies.

If you do use the abbreviations you sometimes have the odd situation where it is tempting to add a word to explain what the abbreviation is, yet the word is what one of the letters stands for. For example, CPI index, ATM machines or PIN numbers.

The use of abbreviations in locators is a topic for discussion at another time.

Use *see* references or double post?

There are four ways you can refer readers to the main heading sexually transmitted infections (STI):

1. Refer to full entry
   STI *see* sexually transmitted infections (STI)

2. Refer to name only
   STI *see* sexually transmitted infections

3. From detailed abbreviation entry
   STI (sexually transmitted infections) *see* sexually transmitted infections (STI)

4. Or
   STI (sexually transmitted infections) *see* sexually transmitted infections

My indexing software tells me I have an error if I use option 2, However, option 2 is seen in many indexes. If picking option 1 or 2 be consistent in the index. Despite looking at various indexing standards, style guides and books, I couldn't find any comment on this aspect of cross-referencing.

Creating lots of *see* references for initialisms can take up a lot of space in the index. If space is limited, this can be at the expense of useful headings, particularly if the book has a list of abbreviations. I would say less use is better.

If you feel the need to qualify the abbreviation, as in option 3 or 4, perhaps this is when you need to consider double posting?

Use in *see also* references

Similar formations can be used for *see also* references. Consider references to main heading environmental impact statements (EISs)

1. Refer to full heading
   sustainability *see also* environmental impact statements (EISs)

2. Refer to name only
   sustainability *see also* environmental impact statements

Both forms appear in indexes.

Filing

Discussing the filing of Mac or Mc names and St or Saint is likely to quickly divide a room of indexers. File Mc names as spelt or as if spelt Mac? Similarly, file St names at St or as if spelt Saint? The indexing standard AS999:1999 says the following:

> 'Contractions and abbreviations should be filed as given, not as if spelt out in their fullest form. E.g. Inc, plc.' (7.3.6)

Some publishers have house preferences on filing these. I grumble at having to look for St Kilda under Saint Kilda, yet it is common on many computer listings.

I found the following comment in Nancy Mulvany's *Indexing books*:

> 'Abbreviation and acronyms…are not usually alphabetized as if they are spelled out. An exception that many publishers allow is that the abbreviation U.S. may be alphabetized as though spelled out. This allows a term like U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to be interfiles with other U.S. entries such as United States Coast Guard.' (p 132-3)

This was a surprise as I would have suggested using either U.S. (to follow the style used) or United States. Would you interfile NSW with New South Wales?

Filing symbols, Greek letters and other shortened forms can cause indexers to ring up colleagues to discuss various options. I offer the following general advice:

1. Arrangement in standardized or traditional sequence.
   For example, traditional sequence of symbols for the planets in the order of distance from the sun, may be sorted in the standardized or traditional sequence.

2. Arrangement in order of appearance.
   For example, index to software manual, icons may be arranged in order in which they are discussed in the text (but before any numerals or letters), or in the order they are displayed on the toolbar, menu, panel, or screen.

3. Arrangement by verbal equivalent.
   (from NISO TR03-1999 p 10)

I welcome comments from readers on this topic, especially any interesting filing issues.

References
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Style manual, 6th edition, Wiley, Sydney, 2002.
Wellisch, Hans H, *Guidelines for alphabetical arrangement of letters and sorting of numbers and other symbols*, NISO TR03-1999, NISO Press, Bethesda, Maryland, 1999.

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Professional development: The Future of the Scholarly Book seminar

The Future of the Scholarly Book was the title of a seminar organised by ANU Library in July 2018. Readers may be interested to read a summary (https://www.publishers.asn.au/news/the-scholarly-book-dont-underestimate-its-future) or some of the papers (https://anulib.anu.edu.au/news-events/events-exhibitions/future-scholarly-book).

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Upcoming meetings

Day: First Thursday of the month
Venue: Hawthorn Library meeting room 1 (called Glenferrie), 584 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn
Time: 6.00 – 8.00 pm

Carparking is available down the side of the building. If you are travelling by public transport there is a tram stop nearby, and Glenferrie Station is just a couple of tram stops away.

After the meeting we will go to a local restaurant for a meal (at own expense). For those travelling by public transport, there is always plenty of space in members' cars to enable us to all get to the restaurant quickly. You will also be well located for getting home afterwards, with the train station and tram stops just a short walk away.

October 4	Editing the index	Editing indexes is a good way of learning about indexes through detecting errors. Come and put your editing skills to the test, and edit a deliberately faulty (made up) index. You will be given a house style to edit against.
November 1	Show and tell	Have you seen a different index in a book, app or journal? Have you explored different indexing techniques or areas you would like to share? Perhaps a new software feature or app? Has a job encouraged you to arrange material in a different way? In other words, bring something to show and tell with others.
December 6	Indexing handwritten journals	Even in this computer age, handwritten journals are still popular. Indexing these has a long history. This session will explore some of the methods, tools and terminology being used by those keeping journals today. Are there tips for professional indexers?

Contributions to *Melbourne Indexers Bulletin* are welcome at melbourneindexers@gmail.com