

CITATION OF PERIODICALS

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Shows the purpose of using abbreviated titles of periodicals in citation. Indicates the lack of uniformity in abbreviation among international lists. Enumerates some principles for ensuring uniformity. Recommends the use of co-extensive class numbers for citation and identification of periodicals.

The main purpose and idea behind the use of abbreviated forms; instead of the full titles, in the citations of and references to, periodicals, are that space, and hence time, could be saved in writing, printing, etc., and that the periodicals in question could be correctly identified from the abbreviated titles.

In the eighteenth century and earlier abbreviated forms were used even to cite book titles. Nobody could then possibly have foreseen the present day proliferation of periodicals particularly in the sciences. The practice of using abbreviated titles, once convenient for a much smaller number of periodicals, has given us quite a few problems to solve when applied to the greatly increased number of periodicals. Complications arise because of titles almost similar in form in the same as well as different languages and countries, the publications of corporate bodies and the transposition of words, the inconsistent use of capitals and small letters in the abbreviated forms, etc. Opinions differ as to the principles to be followed in the compilation of standard international lists of abbreviated forms or titles of periodicals. Hence we have more than one such international list.

Besides the differences in international lists, to bring into common use any one set of abbreviations is further complicated because, it is often the scientist who quotes, refers to and copies down titles of periodicals and ordinarily he is not fully aware of the complexities involved in bibliographic citations, add to this the various editorial practices and stipulations of journal reference methods of different periodicals. So then our scientist uses any type of abbreviation which comes easily to him 'at the moment', most often without any thought as to the future use of the same form or as to standard forms in international lists. On the other hand, the librarian and the bibliographer have to identify the journals referred to by these varying abbreviated forms, and hence their anxiety for uniformity of citation methods. Then there is what may be termed 'national usage and familiarity'. To an Indian doctor the abbreviation J. I. M. A. would be quite familiar, in the U. S. A. any medical man will recognize J. A. M. A. or even J. A. C. S., while among Japanese medical men the abbreviation J. J. P. S. may be quite common usage. But outside their respective countries these abbreviations would be difficult for easy identification. There is yet another factor which, though not quite obvious, has a bearing on the question. A name or abbreviation becomes fixed in our mind and comes into common usage if we always employ the same form of the name in

speech, writing, etc. We always say 'Journal-of-Clinical-Endocrinology' and not 'J-Clin-Endoc'; we say 'Indian-Journal-of-Pharmacy' and not 'Ind-J-Phar' and so on. Therefore the proper forms of the abbreviations rarely become impressed in the minds of readers.

The conditions or factors which could ensure uniformity in quoting periodicals are:

1 There should be only one form in which periodicals are to be quoted or referred to either in common speech or bibliographic citations.

2 There should be no alternative appellations irrespective of the country of origin or language of the periodicals.

3 The single 'name' of identification should come right from the source of production of the journal, i. e. from the publishers and not given to it or made out by users of the periodicals or bibliographers or librarians.

The present system had come up because the periodicals have been 'named' the way they are done now. Supposing the American Medical Association had christened their periodicals as AMA1, AMA2, AMA3, etc., Messrs Williams & Wilkins their periodicals as WW1, WW2 and so on (following the practice of naming some drugs), we would have referred to those periodicals, as AMA1, AMA2, etc. So it largely depends on the way periodicals are named by the publishers.

Different ways of citing periodicals have been suggested. McCasland², Reid³, and Bishop⁴ suggested letter abbreviations, while Garfield⁵ pointed out that serial numbers such as those in the World List of Scientific Periodicals could be used to identify periodicals. It would indeed solve many problems if the publishers of periodicals would 'name' their periodicals by these numbers (and forget all about vernacular titles) so that in future the periodicals would be known and referred to by these numbers. There would however, be difficulties with periodicals not in the World List and periodicals to be published.

McCasland hinted in his alphabetic code that the first letter in the code could represent the country of publication, and the second letter a mnemonic for the subject field covered by the periodical. These alphabetic abbreviations depend on the existing titles of periodicals and

so suffer from some of the difficulties now arising out of the use of conventional abbreviated forms for the titles or periodicals.

The classified approach in the naming of periodicals is examined below. The display of current issues and the filing of back volumes of periodicals in classified order is nothing new. The Japanese bibliography of medical sciences gives a classified list of Japanese medical periodicals according to U. D. C. A good example of a classified list of thousands of scientific periodicals is the Union Catalogue of Learned Periodicals Publications in South Asia, v. 1 Physical and Biological Sciences (by S. R. Ranganathan and others, Indian Library Association, 1953). The classification used is the Colon scheme. For each periodical the class number gives

- The major subject covered by the periodical
- The country of publication
- The year of issue of the first number

In addition the class number would indicate whether the publication is an ordinary journal, a report, yearbook, etc.

Examples:

Journal, Society of Telegraph Engineers	}	D66m56, M72
Society of Telegraph Engineers, Journal		
West African Medical Journal		Lm654, N27
Geophysical Memoirs		H4m56, N11
Bulletin, Calcutta Statistical Association	}	B28m44, N47
Calcutta Statistical Association, Bulletin		

It would be possible to shorten the class numbers for existing periodicals, say by giving the number for a wider geographical area instead of for the specific country, so long as there is no conflict between any two class numbers.

Supposing scientific periodicals hereafter take these class numbers instead of their present titles, in due course the periodicals will be known and referred to by these class numbers.

The advantages of 'naming' periodicals by class numbers are:

When periodicals are displayed or back sets filed by the numbers (which are also the 'names' of the periodicals) there will result a grouping

of periodicals by subjects the advantages of which are obvious.

All associated periodicals on the same subject, issued by the same learned body could be conveniently brought together.

Until the subjects covered by a periodical totally change, the class number need not change (i. e. the 'name' of the periodical would remain the same).

The present difficulties viz transposition of words in the title in the filing of and citations to periodical publications of corporate bodies would not arise.

In the making of future union catalogues of periodicals, which would automatically be of the classified type, there would be considerable saving in the alphabetical part wherein there would be need for only indication of publications of corporate bodies and a subject index to the classification scheme.

Difficulties with classified arrangements of periodicals arise from our having both the alphabetic titles as well as classified arrangements. What is proposed in the present paper is a radical change: Publishers should avoid the alphabetic or vernacular titles and use only the symbolic class numbers instead. The scope of the periodical and other details could be indicated in the subtitle, imprint, etc. The periodical will come to be known by these class

numbers and by constant use readers would soon learn what symbols represent that subjects and other classification details, if they are interested.

I have mentioned only about the Colon scheme for the classification of the journals, because, as already indicated, for each journal the class number gives useful bibliographic data and each facet can be sharpened for individualization and exact definition, and we already have an extensive union catalogue in which periodicals are arranged by these class numbers.

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