

Recommendations for

Citation of unpublished documents

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- Construction Industry Research and Information Association
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The following bodies were also represented in the drafting of the standard, through subcommittees and panels:

- British Association for Local History
- British Records Association
- Council for British Archaeology
- Historical Association
- Institute of Historical Research
- Public Record Office
- Record Users' Group
- Royal Historical Society
- Scottish Record Office
- Society of Antiquaries of London
- Society of Archivists
- Victoria History of the Counties of England

Amendments issued since publication

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Foreword

This British Standard is intended for the use of authors and editors needing concise instructions for setting out bibliographical references to unpublished documents existing only as unique originals or in a very limited number of copies, and for providing citations to them in the text of a book or article. While it is anticipated that its principal application will be in works that are not themselves primarily bibliographical, it may also supply a basis for more exhaustive entries in specialized bibliographies.

There are two principal differences between this standard and the standard for citing publications, BS 5605.

These are:

- a) the provision of a location element showing where the cited document is held and may be consulted; and
- b) the recognition, in addition to the numeric system and the Harvard system, of running notes, which are widely used in literature citing historical manuscripts;

It is likely that future standards for the citation of published documents will reflect this change.

Many references to unpublished documents contain no more than an abbreviation for a repository and a call number. This standard recommends that every reference, either directly or indirectly, provides data describing the cited document as well as its location.

To amplify the recommendations of this British Standard, example references are given in Appendix A.

A British Standard does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users of British Standards are responsible for their correct application.

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 8, an inside back cover and a back cover.

This standard has been updated (see copyright date) and may have had amendments incorporated. This will be indicated in the amendment table on the inside front cover.

1 Scope

This British Standard is concerned with the citation of unpublished documents, which may be public or private in origin, and may include legal, business and administrative records, correspondence and private papers, working papers, original compositions, transcripts or other copies, annotations in printed works, inscriptions, and documents in non-written forms.

NOTE 1 The punctuation given in the examples contained in this standard is illustrative and not prescriptive.

NOTE 2 The titles of the publications referred to in this standard are listed on the inside back cover.

2 Definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard the following definitions apply.

2.1

bibliographical reference

a set of data describing a document or part of a document, and sufficiently precise and detailed to identify and locate it

2.2

document

a combination of a medium and the information recorded on or in it, which can be used for consultation, study or evidence

2.3

piece

the smallest group of documents which a custodian normally expects to produce separately. A piece can be a bound volume, a bundle of documents, a single sheet, etc.

3 General methods of citation

This standard recognizes and describes three methods of linking statements in a text to the bibliographical details of documents which support those statements. These methods are running notes, the numeric system and the Harvard system.

In works which cite many unpublished documents the use of running notes to accommodate bibliographical and other information is recommended.

The Harvard system is the least satisfactory for citing unpublished items.

4 Methods of citation in the text

4.1 Running notes. Running notes use a sequence of normally superscript numerals in the text leading to correspondingly numbered notes which may contain bibliographical references. Subsequent references to a particular document receive separate numbers.

Examples:

“... measures which the lords were urging on the king.²⁶ Henry seems to have been ineffectual according to Traquair.²⁷ With the appointment of a new receiver of rents,²⁸ ...”

4.2 Numeric system. The numeric system uses a sequence of superscript or bracketed numerals to refer to documents in the order in which they occur in the text.

Examples:

“From manuscript evidence (26) it appears ...” or
“From manuscript evidence [26] it appears ...” or
“From manuscript evidence²⁶ it appears ...”

Subsequent references to a particular document receive the same number. If different parts of a document are cited at different points in the text, the appropriate folio or page number, etc., may be added to the reference number in the text.

Example:

“... measures which the lords were urging on the king (26, fol. 22). Henry seems to have been ineffectual according to Traquair (27). With the appointment of a new receiver of rents (26, fol. 2), ...”

4.3 Harvard system. In the Harvard system, at every point in the text at which reference to a particular document is made, the first significant word or words of the entry in the list of references and the year of origin are inserted in parentheses. If the significant word(s) appear naturally in the text, the year is given in parentheses; if not, both the words and the year are so given. If no date is known, “n.d.” should be used. If there are several works with the same opening word(s) and the same year, these are distinguished by adding lower case letters (a, b, c, etc.) after the year and within the parentheses.

Examples:

“... measures which the lords were urging on the king (Exchequer, 1634-1639, fol. 22). Henry seems to have been ineffectual according to Traquair (1638). With the appointment of a new receiver of rents (Exchequer, 1634-1639, fol. 2), ...”