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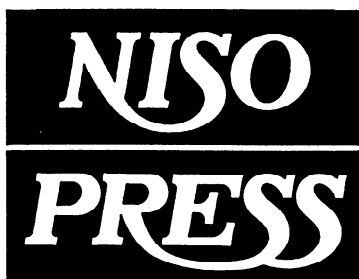
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Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri

Abstract: A thesaurus is a controlled vocabulary arranged in a known order and structured so that equivalence, homographic, hierarchical, and associative relationships among terms are displayed clearly and identified by standardized relationship indicators that are employed reciprocally. The primary purposes of a thesaurus are (a) to facilitate retrieval of documents and (b) to achieve consistency in the indexing of written or otherwise recorded documents and other items, mainly for postcoordinate information storage and retrieval systems. This standard provides guidelines for constructing monolingual thesauri: formulating the descriptors, establishing relationships among terms, and effectively presenting the information in print and on a screen. It also includes thesaurus maintenance procedures and recommended features of thesaurus management systems.

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Developed by the
National Information Standards Organization
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American National Standards Institute**



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Foreword

(This foreword is not part of the American National Standard Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri, ANSI/NISO Z39.19-1993. It is included for information only.)

The first edition of this standard, published in 1974, was prepared by Subcommittee 25 on Thesaurus Rules and Conventions of American National Standards Committee Z39 on Standardization in the Field of Library Work, Documentation, and Related Publishing Practices (later known as Library and Information Sciences and Related Publishing Practices) [1]. The subcommittee drew heavily on standards of practice developed by the Engineers Joint Council, the Committee on Scientific and Technical Information of the Federal Council for Science and Technology, and UNESCO [2,3,4]. In 1980 ANSI published a revised edition of the thesaurus standard. In 1985, the National Information Standards Organization, the successor of American National Standards Committee Z39, balloted to reaffirm the standard. Two "no" votes led to a default ballot in 1987, which resulted in additional recommendations for revision.

In 1988 Standards Committee PP was appointed to draft a revised standard. The committee members, chosen for their expertise in both the theory and the practice of the development and use of thesauri in information systems, represented a wide range of subject interests (aerospace, business, medicine, social sciences, information science, and the arts).

The current revision borrows heavily from the corresponding international and British standards [5,6]. It differs substantially in structure and word-

ing from the 1980 American edition, but supports most of its recommendations. An important change is in the handling of the whole-part relationship, which is now treated as a special case of the hierarchical relationship rather than as an associative relationship.

Another notable change is the deletion of the word *use* from the title because this standard does not prescribe how thesauri are to be used. The phrase *monolingual thesauri* has been added to the title to distinguish this standard from a separate standard for multilingual thesauri [7].

This edition continues to emphasize the role of thesauri in information storage and retrieval systems, but recognizes their applicability to other fields, such as knowledge engineering. New sections deal with screen display and thesaurus management systems.

Unlike the previous edition, the revised standard does not take a monolithic approach to thesaurus structure and display, but instead points out the advantages and disadvantages of various formats. Many of these formats are illustrated in an appendix of supplementary figures.

Suggestions for improving this standard are welcome. They should be sent to the National Information Standards Organization, P.O. Box 1056, Bethesda, MD 20827, telephone (301) 975-2814.

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6. Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of Monolingual Thesauri. London: British Standards Institution, 1979. (BS 5723:1979). Superseded by: British Standard Guide to Establishment and Development of Monolingual Thesauri. (BS 5723:1987=ISO 2788:1986).
7. Documentation—Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of Multilingual Thesauri. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization, 1985. (ISO 5964-1985).

Abbreviations (Thesaurus Codes) and Conventions Used in This Standard

Abbreviations (Thesaurus Codes) and Relationship Indicators:

BT	=	broader term
BTG	=	broader term (generic)
BTI	=	broader term (instance)
BTP	=	broader term (partitive)
GS	=	generic structure
HN	=	history note
NT	=	narrower term
NTG	=	narrower term (generic)
NTI	=	narrower term (instance)
NTP	=	narrower term (partitive)
RT	=	related term
SEE	=	equivalent to U (USE)
SN	=	scope note
TT	=	top term
U	=	use
UF	=	used for
UF+	=	used for . . . and . . .
USE+	=	use . . . and . . .
X	=	see from (equivalent to UF); reciprocal of <i>see</i>

Conventions:

Descriptors are in **boldface**.

Words discussed in the text are enclosed in 'single quotation marks'.

Underlined terms are defined in the glossary.

Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri

1. Introduction

A thesaurus^{*}, for the purposes of this standard, is a controlled vocabulary of terms in natural language that are designed for postcoordination. The need to control the formation and use of terms stems mainly from two basic features of natural language, namely synonyms (different terms representing the same concept) and polysemes or homographs (terms with the same spelling representing different concepts). The controlled vocabulary is established by information specialists or lexicographers and is generally employed in indexing.

Indexing is the process by which subject terms or classification symbols are assigned to concepts dealt with in documents. It includes any system in which the selection and organization of indexing terms call for human intellectual decisions, regardless of whether computer assistance is also used to store and manipulate these terms or to identify documents to which certain terms or combinations of terms have been assigned. The effectiveness of indexing as a means for identifying and retrieving documents depends upon a well-constructed indexing language.

Research in the field of information science has shown that controlled vocabularies improve both precision and recall in searching. For example, they improve precision by defining the scope of terms; they increase recall by retrieving documents that employ different terms for the same concept. (Some of the manuals of thesaurus construction listed in Appendix E cite studies that have demonstrated these advantages of controlled vocabularies.)

Thesauri may be used in computer-assisted indexing, but this standard is primarily oriented toward thesauri employed for assignment indexing by humans (as opposed to derivative indexing by machines).

It is important to note, however, that thesauri are not limited to systems that apply vocabulary control at the indexing stage. Thesauri may also be helpful to the user searching unindexed, i.e., natural language, databases. The value of thesauri is currently recognized as well by researchers in knowledge engineering and hypertext. The many uses to which thesauri may be put are recognized in the standard, but not explicitly discussed.

* Underlined terms are defined in the glossary.

1.1. Purpose and Structure

A thesaurus may be considered in terms of both its purpose and its structure.

1.1.1. Purpose

Four principal purposes are served by a thesaurus:

- a) *Translation*. To provide a means for translating the natural language of authors, indexers, and users into a controlled vocabulary used for indexing and retrieval.
- b) *Consistency*. To promote consistency in the assignment of index terms.
- c) *Indication of Relationships*. To indicate semantic relationships among terms.
- d) *Retrieval*. To serve as a searching aid in retrieval of documents.

1.1.2. Structure

A thesaurus displays through its structure the equivalence (synonymous), hierarchical, and associative relationships among terms. These relationships are defined in section 5. Print and screen display formats used to show these relationships are recommended in sections 6 and 7, respectively.

1.2. Vocabulary Control

Vocabulary control in a thesaurus is achieved through three principal means: (a) the delineation of the scope, or meaning, of descriptors (see section 3.2); (b) the linking of synonymous and nearly synonymous terms through the equivalence relationship (see section 5.2); and (c) the disambiguation of homographs (see section 3.2.1).

2. Scope of the Standard

This standard presents guidelines and conventions for the contents, display, methods of construction, and maintenance of a monolingual thesaurus. It also notes the recommended features of a thesaurus management system.

The standard deals with some aspects of term selection, in that it contains recommended procedures for vocabulary control, but it is particularly concerned with means for establishing and displaying certain kinds of relationships between terms.

This standard should be regarded as a set of recommendations based on preferred techniques