

ANSI/NISO Z39.20-1999

Criteria for Price Indexes for Printed Library Materials

Abstract: The purpose of price indexes for print library materials is to measure as accurately as possible on a periodic basis the extent of price changes. A price index is an economic indicator that in systematic fashion for a period of time and at fixed intervals of time (usually annual) provides for the derivation of average prices and citation of changes in terms of index numbers. Price indexes describe the essential characteristics of various forms of library materials (as set forth in the standard) so that the same characteristics are measured periodically. A set of prices indexes is intended to meet administrative needs for budgeting, materials price analysis, and other purposes in libraries and other organizations with similar information needs. Price indexes represent a standard measurement of the market dynamics of a particular publication type (format) rather than reflecting exact pricing for a specific library, publisher, or situation.

An American National Standard
Developed by the
National Information Standards Organization

Approved August 3, 1999 by the
American National Standards Institute

Published by the National Information Standards Organization
Bethesda, Maryland



NISO Press, Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A.

Published by
NISO Press
4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 300
Bethesda, MD 20814
www.niso.org

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NISO Press, 4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 300, Bethesda, MD 20814.

Printed in the United States of America
ISSN: 1041-5653 National Information Standard Series
ISBN: 1-880124-46-7

 This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R 1997) Permanence of Paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

National Information Standards Organization (U.S.)

Criteria for price indexes for printed library materials: an American national
standard/developed by the National Information Standards Organization.

p. cm. — (National information standards series, ISSN 1041-5653)

Includes bibliographical references.

"ANSI/NISO Z39.20-1999".

ISBN 1-880124-46-7

1. Acquisitions (Libraries)—Costs—Statistical methods Standards—United States.
2. Library materials—Prices—Statistical methods Standards—United States.
3. Books—Prices—Statistical methods Standards—United States. 4. Price indexes
Standards—United States. I. Title. II. Series.

Z689.5.U6N38 1999

338.4'70705'0973—dc21

99-21579

CIP

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Foreword

(This foreword is not part of the American National Standard Criteria for Price Indexes for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.20-1999. It is included for information only.)

The first American National Standard for Criteria for Price Indexes for Library Materials ANSI Z39.20-1974 was published in 1974. A revision was issued in 1983 after four years of deliberation over a variety of concerns in the areas of classification and data collection. In 1991, a revision was drafted by Fred C. Lynden, Rockefeller Library, Brown University, acting as Technical Editor, but consensus approval on that revision was not achieved. The current revision committee was established in 1995 to review the standard in light of its primary purpose and use along with those issues that were raised during the previous review process, such as the implications of the increasing number of electronic publications.

Over the years, this standard has become much misunderstood. It is the desire of the current revision committee that the streamlining of the standard's scope and content will serve to alleviate that situation. Contrary to some beliefs, the standard did not in the past, and does not now, provide guidelines for the conduct of price studies based on a particular discipline's literature, i.e., cost studies that attempt to create an equitable comparison across publishers by reducing subscription price to a unit of measure based on cost/page or cost/word or cost/numbers of characters or similar cost measure. The committee wishes to indicate clearly that the standard is a macro-level view of what is happening to the pricing of certain information resources and is not intended to highlight specific publishers or their prices. Further, the committee wishes to emphasize that the prices covered by this standard's indexes should be those set for libraries in the United States and not for members of professional societies or individual purchasers.

This standard's primary purpose has been to provide both a historical and current context so that librarians can make informed budget decisions. For example, the standard can be used when conducting price surveys (versus studies) and projections. Following that frame of reference, it is also apparent that the materials having a major impact on a library's budget are primarily printed books and journals. Thus, this revision of the standard contracts its scope to include hardcover and paperback books, and periodicals, omitting non-print (electronic) materials, microforms, serials services, and newspapers. With the deletion of these materials from the scope of this revised standard, its focus is reflected in a new title emphasizing select print materials. The narrowing scope is not intended to diminish in any way the importance of material types not specifically addressed in the criteria. The intention is to provide basic criteria in broad categories that can be easily extrapolated to other more specific material types without developing a highly detailed standard that would have a short shelf life due to rapid changes in the publishing industry.

Another important departure from the previous standard is the shift from the use of *volume* in the criteria for the compilation of price indexes for books to the use of *title*. The revision committee recognizes that using volume counts in price indexes provides a more accurate measurement of per-unit costs, but the criteria were written using title counts in order to reflect the best common practice in use at this time. Most national indexes are currently derived from vendor-supplied data that report price by title. The consistent use of either title or volume as a unit measure would produce an accurate price index.

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Librarians who plan to develop local indexes based on their institutional data need to recognize the differences between the use of external data, as represented by published indexes, and those using local data. A published index seeks to represent the overall market dynamic of a segment of publishing, reflecting the general economic movement of prices. The local index usually seeks to develop data that reflect their own institutional cost experiences, including those costs generally excluded from a published index, such as discounts or handling/shipping charges.

The exclusion of non-print media leads to the question of why the revision committee confined the scope of the standard rather than expanding into the area of electronic information products. It was the general sense of the committee that current pricing models in the area of electronic publishing are premature and too much in a state of flux for an index to be able to accurately measure price changes across, or even within, formats. With some publishers charging for electronic journals, and others putting forth products for a year or more at no cost, and still others linking the cost of electronic journals to concurrent purchase of the print versions, the committee believed that to endorse a comparison among such publications would serve neither the library nor the publishing community well.

However, the committee does encourage individual researchers to attempt applications of a price index approach to electronic publications on a local, micro-level versus the broad marketplace, so that some experience can be gained during the period that electronic products are in development and pricing models become measurable. Development of new price indexes based on needs specific to licenses for databases with varying levels of access and prices is encouraged. In anticipation of creating price indexes for electronic products in the future, the results of such investigations would prove invaluable for this standard's next revision process.

Finally, the revision committee wishes to emphasize that the standard defines criteria for an index to publishers' prices and not to any explicit production costs or perceived user value. It is vitally important that investigators applying this standard make the distinction between the strictly quantitative nature of the standard's criteria for indexes and the potential for both quantitative and qualitative approaches in other research efforts.

This standard was processed and approved for submittal to ANSI by the National Information Standards Organization. It was balloted by the NISO Voting Members November 28, 1997 - February 28, 1998. It will next be reviewed in 2004. Suggestions for improving this standard are welcome. They should be sent to the National Information Standards Organization, 4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 300, Bethesda, MD 20814. NISO approval of this standard does not necessarily imply that all Voting Members voted for its approval. At the time it approved this standard, NISO had the following Voting Members:

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The Ad Hoc Working Group on Criteria for Price Indexes for Printed Library Materials had the following members at the time this standard was approved:

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The Committee acknowledges the early membership of Ronald Akie, SilverPlatter, Inc., and considered reading by Albert Simmonds, R.R. Bowker, along with special contributions to the first draft revision of the standard by Frederick Lynden, Rockefeller Library, Brown University.

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Criteria for Price Indexes for Printed Library Materials

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

The scope of this standard is limited to printed paper publications and microforms. Other types of near-print or non-print materials are excluded.

1.1.1 Publications Included in the Scope.

This standard relates to the following publications commercially available to libraries in the United States: hardcover trade and technical books, paperback books, and periodicals.

1.1.2 Publications Excluded from the Scope.

The following kinds of publications are excluded from the scope of this standard:

- (1) Publications issued for advertising purposes, provided that the literary or scientific text is subsidiary and that the publications are usually distributed free of charge. Examples of these publications are the following:
 - (a) Trade catalogs, prospectuses, and other types of commercial, industrial, and tourist advertising.
 - (b) Publications describing activities or technical progress in some branch of industry or commerce and drawing attention to the products or services supplied by the publisher.
- (2) Publications belonging to the following categories, when they are considered to be of a transitory character:
 - (a) Timetables, price lists, and telephone directories.
 - (b) Programs of entertainments, exhibitions, fairs, and meetings.
 - (c) Company directives, circulars, and regulations and reports of business firms.
 - (d) Calendars.
- (3) Publications belonging to the following categories in which text is not the important part:
 - (a) Musical works (scores or music books), provided that the music is intended to be more important than the text.