

The **A** **L** **A** Glossary  
of Library and Information Science

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**Heartsill Young, Editor**

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## of Library and Information Science

**Heartsill Young, Editor**

*with the assistance of*

**Terry Belanger**

**John B. Corbin**

**Rose Mary Magrill**

**Fred M. Peterson**

**Diana M. Thomas**

**Andrew G. Torok**

**Blanche Woolls**

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# Foreword

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The idea of revising the *A.L.A. Glossary of Library Terms* was considered from the moment of publication in 1943, the first edition being viewed as tentative. Preliminary work was implemented by the Editorial Committee of ALA, which took two polls of the field to learn whether a revision was needed. The results of these polls, one in 1951 and the other in 1954, were inconclusive. With the passage of time, the answer became evident. Librarianship began to move in several distinct directions at one time, and the number of new terms being absorbed from other fields made the need for a new edition beyond dispute. In 1975 the Publishing Committee of the ALA accepted a staff plan for revising the work.

Because of the diverse sources of new terms, the essence of the plan was to call upon experts in the different specialties of library and information science to write definitions. The work of these specialists would be coordinated by a chairperson who would compile the terms to be defined, examine the definitions submitted, and make them stylistically consistent. J. Phillip Immroth accepted the chair in 1976. After his untimely death in 1977, Heartsill Young began the work anew. He assembled a group of seven subject specialists to compose definitions in their fields and supervised the compilation of the GLOSSARY to its completion in 1983.

The terms and definitions included in the GLOSSARY are utilitarian, reflecting as they do the current practices of libraries and related information agencies in the United States. While the definitions do not have the official endorsement of the American Library Association, the Publishing Committee approves them as a contribution toward the development of standard terminology, or a set of terms, which will enable librarians and other information scientists better to communicate with each other and with specialists in related fields.

JOHN Y. COLE  
Chair, ALA  
Publishing Committee  
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# Contributors

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## **Editor**

Heartsill Young, Associate Professor,  
Graduate School of Library and Information  
Science, University of Texas at Austin

## **Contributing Advisers**

Fred M. Peterson, University Librarian, Il-  
linois State University  
*Administration, Buildings and Equipment,  
Public Services*

Rose Mary Magrill, Professor, School of Li-  
brary and Information Sciences, North Texas  
State University  
*Technical Services*

Terry Belanger, Assistant Dean, School of  
Library Service, Columbia University  
*Bibliography, Manuscripts, Rare Books,  
Archives, Conservation*

Diana M. Thomas, Associate Professor,  
Graduate School of Library and Information  
Science, University of California, Los  
Angeles

*Printing, Publishing, Bookbinding*

John B. Corbin, Assistant Director for Ad-  
ministration and Systems, University of  
Houston Libraries  
*Information Science*

Blanche Woolls, Professor, School of Li-  
brary and Information Science, University of  
Pittsburgh  
*Educational Technology*

Andrew G. Torok, Associate Professor, De-  
partment of Library Science, Northern Il-  
linois University  
*Reprography*

# Introduction

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The purpose of this GLOSSARY is to bring together, in one place, the definitions of terms that relate to the provision of access to recorded information by libraries and similar information agencies, individually and collectively, and to the functions and activities performed by those agencies.

More specifically, the GLOSSARY includes definitions of terms related to the production, reproduction, collection, organization, storage, retrieval, use, and conservation of documents, and to the organization, administration, and delivery of services by libraries, media centers, and related information agencies. It also includes terms used in research in those functional areas.

Terms included in the GLOSSARY are drawn not only from library and information science, but also from printing and publishing, including paper, typography, composition, and binding; graphic arts, including photography; computer science; telecommunications; reprography, including micrographics; educational technology; administrative science; and archives administration.

The provision of access to the information recorded in documents is represented by terms related to subject cataloging, classification, indexing and abstracting, and information-retrieval systems employing machine-readable databases and records management files in microform.

The names of persons and corporate bodies are excluded, as are the names of commercial products, systems, and services, with the exception of a few generically used trade names such as Monotype.

The definitions of terms in the GLOSSARY are generally compatible with definitions that have been standardized by such organizations and associations as the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, the National Micrographics Association, the Society of American Archivists, and the National Center for Education Statistics. Any differences are as a rule the result of placing the terms in a broader context or bringing the definitions into conformity with the vocabulary of the GLOSSARY. In the case of definitions that have not been standardized, the definition considered to be the most generally acceptable is presented in the GLOSSARY, and the term is used consistently with that meaning when it appears in the definitions of other terms.

In the case of terms used in different forms by different professional groups, the definition in the GLOSSARY appears under the form considered to be generally acceptable to the group with whom the term is most closely related. For example, the definition of a disc on which sounds are recorded is under *audiodisc*, the form used by media specialists, rather than under *sound disc*.

In those instances when a term has a different meaning in different fields, the first definition is the one used in the field with which the term is considered to be most closely associated. For example, the term *editor* is defined first as it is used in publishing and then as it is used in computer science.

As a rule, terms for which acronyms are only sometimes used are entered under the full term, with a reference from the acronym. However, when the full term is rarely, if ever,

used and is generally unknown, entry is under the acronym, as in the case of COBOL and RECIS.

Generally, definitions are given for specific terms in uninverted form; the user will, for example, find the definition of *star network* under that form, rather than under *network*, *star*, or under the general term *network*, along with the definitions of other types of networks. In some instances, however, the definitions of specific terms are contained within the definition of a broader term, as, for example, under *contrast*. In those instances, a "see" reference is made from the specific to the general term.

The GLOSSARY includes two types of references: "see" and "compare with." Synonymous terms are represented not only by "see" references; they also appear at the end of definitions. For example, the definition of *impact printing* includes the statement, "Synonymous with direct-impression, strike-on, and struck-image printing." The "compare with" references that are included in the definitions refer either to antonymous terms or to related terms, the definitions of which are intended, when compared, to reveal distinctions between the definitions and elucidate them. For example, the definition of *duplex transmission* contains the reference, "Compare with *half-duplex transmission*, *simplex transmission*." Italicized terms found within references are terms under which definitions appear.

The user who does not understand terms used within a definition will frequently find those terms also defined in the GLOSSARY. For example, the definition of *bibliographic control* contains the following terms for which definitions appear in the GLOSSARY: bibliographic description, bibliographic record, bibliographic service center, document, library consortium, library network, and union list.

Alphabetization is letter-by-letter, except in the instance of a few inverted or qualified headings, when the term with modification is not separated by filing from the term unmodified.

As advances are made in technology, changes will occur in the form of documents, in the processes by which they are produced, and in the equipment that is needed for some of them to be read, viewed, or heard. Changes will occur also in the information delivery systems of libraries and similar information agencies. In using the GLOSSARY, one should bear in mind that many of the definitions reflect the state of technology at the beginning of the 1980s.



# Sources

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The editor and members of the revision committee gratefully acknowledge their debt to the many books and articles consulted in the search for definitions to include in the GLOSSARY.

The definitions of categories of professional and supportive staff in libraries and media centers are based on the categories recommended by ALA in its policy statement, *Library Education and Personnel Utilization*, and the categories recommended by the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology in *Media Programs, District and School* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975). The definitions of cartographic terms used as specific material designations in the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, second edition, are those of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Committee for Cartographic Materials.

Major sources consulted are listed below. Short titles or abbreviations for these sources are used in the GLOSSARY to indicate the source of a quoted definition.

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# Glossary



**abbreviated cataloging** see *brief cataloging*

**aberration** A general term covering a variety of optical defects in a lens which result in the improper formation of an optical image, such as astigmatism and spherical aberration.

**abrasion** A fine surface defect on processed photographic film which does not penetrate to the film base. Abrasion generally results from moving contact with another surface and does not fully remove the image. Compare with *scratch*.

**abridged edition** see *abridgment*

**abridgment** A shortened version of a written work, produced by condensation and omission but with retention of the general meaning and manner of presentation of the original, often prepared by someone other than the author of the original. Sometimes used synonymously with *abstract*, *compendium* (2), *digest* (1), *epitome* (2), and *synopsis*, all of which denote the abridgment of a larger work, though with different connotations. Synonymous with abridged edition and condensation.

**abscissa** see *X-axis*

**absence circulation system** A circulation system in which a loan record is created for items at the time they are borrowed. Compare with *inventory circulation system*.

**absolute address** 1. In computer science, an address assigned permanently by a machine designer to identify a data storage location. 2. In computer science, a pattern of characters that identifies a unique storage location without further modification. Synonymous with machine address.

**absolute language** see *machine language*

**absolute location** see *fixed location*

**abstract** An abbreviated, accurate representation of a work, usually without added interpretation or criticism, accompanied by a bibliographic reference to the original work when appearing separately from it. Compare with *synopsis*.

**abstract bulletin** A bulletin issued by a special library which contains abstracts of works of interest to its target group, primarily as a selective dissemination of information service.

**abstracting and indexing service** A serial issued on paper, in microform, or as a machine-readable database which provides subject access to works in a specific subject field or a group of subject fields by means of abstracts and indexes and is available by subscription or fee.

**abstract journal** A journal which consists wholly or substantially of abstracts of works in a specific subject field or a group of subject fields.

**a/c** see *alternating current*

**academic library** A library forming an integral part of a college, university, or other academic institution for postsecondary education, organized and administered to meet the information needs of students, faculty, and affiliated staff of the institution.

**academic status** An official recognition by an institution of postsecondary education that librarians are part of the instructional and research staff, but normally without entitlement to ranks and titles identical to those of faculty, and frequently without commensurate benefits, privileges, rights, and responsibilities. Compare with *faculty status*.

**academy publication** A publication issued by an academy. Sometimes, in an inclusive sense, a publication issued by any learned society.

**access** 1. In computer-based information retrieval, the method by which a computer refers to records in a file, dependent upon their ar-

## accession

rangement. 2. In archives, the general ability to make use of the records of a government, government agency, or other corporate body.

**accession** 1. In technical processing, to enter documents added to a library collection in an accession record. 2. A document that has been accessioned and added to a library collection. 3. In archives, the act and procedures involved in a transfer of legal title and the taking of records or papers into the physical custody of an archival agency, records center, or manuscript repository. (SAA) 4. The records or papers taken into physical custody by an archival agency, records center, or manuscript repository. (SAA)

**accession book** see *accession record*

**accession catalog** see *accession record*

**accession file** see *accession record*

**accession number** A consecutive number assigned to each document as it is added to a library collection.

**accession order** The arrangement of stored documents in the order of their addition to a library collection.

**accession record** A record of documents added to a library collection, arranged in the order of their addition. For each document the record includes its bibliographic identification, source, cost, and accession number. Synonymous with *accession book*, *accession catalog*, and *accession file*.

**access point** 1. A name, term, code, etc., under which a bibliographic record may be searched and identified. Compare with *heading* (1). (AACR2) 2. In computer-based information storage and retrieval, a field designated as a means of access to a record or file.

**access time** In computer-based information retrieval, the interval between the time when data are requested from a storage device and the time delivery begins.

**accident** In classification theory, an attribute which is incidental to a class, may or may not belong to it, and therefore is not essential to its definition.

**accompanying material** A complementary part of a work, physically separate from the document containing the predominant part of

the work and frequently in a different medium, such as maps in a pocket inside a book cover, an answer book accompanying a textbook, and a pamphlet accompanying an audiodisc.

**accountability** In the organization of work, the liability on the part of a responsible person or institution to be called on to answer for the performance of assigned duties. Compare with *responsibility*.

**accredited library school** A library school whose program is accredited by the American Library Association. Compare with *approved library school*.

**accrual accounting** A method of accounting whereby in financial reports revenues are reported when earned (accrued), and materials and services are reported as expenditures when received. Compare with *cash-flow accounting*.

**acetate film** A safety film with a film base of cellulose acetate or cellulose triacetate. Most film in use today has an acetate base. Compare with *nitrate film*.

**acetate tape** A tape of cellulose acetate used as a magnetic tape base.

**achromatic colors** see *color*

**acid-free paper** see *permanent-durable paper*

**acid resist** The light-sensitive coating on a photomechanical printing plate. The degree of light passing through the film negative or positive onto the plate as it is processed determines the hardness of this coating, its resistance to the action of the acid used to etch the printing or nonprinting area on the plate, and thus the depth of the etch.

**acoustic coupler** A modem connecting a remote terminal with the central processing unit of a computer system by means of the handset of a conventional telephone receiver and dialing over a public or private telephone line. Compare with *modem*.

**acoustic feedback** In a sound system, the loud noise caused by sound reentering the device which transmitted the original sound. Most often this occurs when sound from the loudspeaker reenters the microphone, causing a shrill howl.

**acquisition number** The unique number used by a library to identify a bibliographic item on a purchase order. Sometimes standard codes such as the International Standard Book Number and the International Standard Serial Number are used as acquisition numbers.

**acquisitions department** The administrative unit of a library which performs acquisition services. Synonymous with *order department*.

**acquisition services** Activities related to obtaining library materials by purchase, exchange, or gift, including preorder bibliographic searching, ordering and receiving materials, processing invoices, and the maintenance of the necessary records related to acquisitions.

**acquisitions files** A general term referring to the order records kept by an acquisitions department. May include such files as the on-order/in-process file, outstanding-order file, in-process file, order-number file, date-of-order file, and dealer file. Synonymous with *order files*.

**acquisitions librarian** A librarian in charge of or assisting in the work of an acquisitions department. Synonymous with *order librarian*.

**acquisitions searching** see *preorder bibliographic search*

**across the grain** see *against the grain*

**acting edition** An edition of a play which gives the text as used in stage production (sometimes in a particular production), with entrances and exits, and other stage business. Compare with *script* (1).

**actinic light** Light rays of short wavelength, occurring in the violet and ultraviolet parts of the spectrum, which are capable of producing photochemical changes in a photosensitive material, such as photographic film.

**action group** see *task force*

**active file** A file that is currently in use. Compare with *inactive file*, *dead file*.

**active records (archives)** see *current records*

**activity** In information storage and retrieval, the frequency of referral to records in a file.

**activity ratio** In information storage and retrieval, the ratio of records referred to or updated to the total number of records in a file.

**acutance** An objective measure of the sharpness or resolution of a photographic image.

**adaptation** The modification of a work for a purpose, use, or medium other than that for which the original was intended, such as a dramatization, the free transcription of a musical work, or an engraving from an original painting.

**added copy** An additional copy of an item already in a library collection which is to be, or has been, added to the collection. Compare with *duplicate* (1). In the plural, sometimes called multiple copies.

**added edition** An edition of a bibliographic item added to a library collection that differs from editions already in the collection.

**added entry** 1. An access point other than a main entry. Compare with *main entry* (1). 2. In a unit entry catalog, a bibliographic record, additional to the main entry, by which a bibliographic item is represented. There may be added entries for joint author, editor, translator, illustrator, title, series, subject, etc. Compare with *main entry* (2).

**added title page** In cataloging, a title page preceding or following the title page chosen as the basis for the description of the bibliographic item. It may be more general, such as a series title page, or equally general, such as a title page in another language. (AACR2)

**addendum** Brief additional matter, less extensive than a supplement, which is essential to the completeness of the text of a bibliographic item and is usually added at the end of it. Compare with *appendix*.

**address** A name or number identifying a specific computer-storage device or location of data in storage.

**adhesive binding** Various methods of leaf affixing which rely on the application of adhesives to hold together the leaves of a volume. The back edges of the volume are trimmed to produce a block of separate leaves, and the edges may be roughened or notched before the adhesive is applied and the case is attached. Among the most common methods of adhesive binding are *fan*

*adhesive*, double-fan adhesive, *perfect*, and *thread sealing*.

**adhesives** A large group of sticky substances used to hold two surfaces together, either by mechanical or chemical binding, or both. In library binding and preservation work, three main groups are used: starch pastes, animal glues, and synthetics. Of the latter group, polyvinyl-acetate emulsions have become widely used in recent years.

**ad hoc committee** A committee established for a limited time to address a given issue or accomplish a particular task or purpose. Compare with *task force*.

**ad interim copyright** Under the U.S. copyright law from 1909 to July 1982, a temporary copyright, lasting for a maximum of five years, for books and periodicals in the English language published abroad, and which might be extended to a full copyright if certain conditions were met, including the manufacture of a U.S. edition within the temporary period. The U.S. copyright law of 1976 so liberalized the manufacturing requirement, effective July 1982, that ad interim copyright was excluded from the law as no longer needed.

**Adjustable Classification** A classification system devised by James Duff Brown in 1897. Designed for smaller libraries, the system used an integral notation, with numbers left vacant to allow for the insertion of new subjects.

**adjustable shelving** Shelving in which the individual shelves may be adjusted to accommodate library materials of different heights. Compare with *fixed shelving*.

**administration** 1. A term used variously as a broader term than "management" or synonymously with "management." "Administration" may be defined as the process of coordinating the total resources of an organization toward the accomplishment of the desired goals of that organization through the execution of a group of interrelated functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. So defined, "administration" is usually used synonymously with "management" in current literature. "Administration" may be considered to be a broader term, emphasizing the planning function, involving goal setting and major policy formulation, with management variously limited to the process of coordinating certain functions and activities of an organization toward

the accomplishment of its goals. 2. Those persons in an organization with primary responsibility for executing the process of administration.

**administrative and support services** Those activities related to the provision of general administrative services for the operation of an organization. Specific services included are personnel management, public relations, fiscal management, planning, program management, publications, advertising, and plant and logistical services.

**administrative assistant** An assistant to the head of an organization or an organizational unit, usually with staff authority, who performs specified duties in support of the activities of the head.

**administrative centralization** *see centralization, administrative*

**administrative code** A set of administrative rules and regulations defining acceptable conduct for an organization.

**administrative control** *see control*

**administrative decentralization** *see decentralization, administrative*

**administrative discretion** Authority delegated to an administrative officer or supervisor within an organization to make decisions within a defined area of responsibility.

**administrative manual** A compilation of policies, rules, and procedures issued by the top administration of an organization which documents officially accepted practices for employees. Compare with *staff handbook*, *organization manual*.

**administrative policy** A policy which is officially sanctioned by the appropriate administrative officers of an organization.

**administrative procedure** A procedure which is officially sanctioned by the appropriate administrative officers of an organization.

**administrative staff** The group of individuals, usually the top management of an organization, with primary responsibility for administering and providing direction for the organization.

**administrator** A term frequently used to designate any individual in an organization whose position consists entirely or primarily of administrative duties.

**admission record** A permit, pass, attendance slip, or other form, used to check a student's attendance in a school library media center with the student's classroom and study hall schedules. Synonymous with library pass and library permit.

**ADP** see *automatic data processing*

**ADSTARS** see *automatic document storage and retrieval system*

**adult education** The education of adults beyond school age through regularly organized programs which have as their purpose the development of skills, knowledge, habits, or attitudes.

**adult services** The provision of library materials, services, and programs to meet the specific interests and needs of adults by a public library.

**advance copies** Copies of a book sent out before publication date for review or promotional purposes, sometimes unbound or in a binding different from the publisher's binding. Copies sent out unbound are generally in folded signatures and are termed advance sheets or early sheets. Compare with *review copies*.

**advance sheets** see *advance copies*

**advertisement file** A file of advertisements for products and services, found most frequently in the special libraries of business firms and corporations.

**advertising types** see *display types*

**advisory services** Special counsel rendered to a library or other agency by an expert or group of experts, usually external, commissioned to study the overall operation or specific areas of concern. Synonymous with consulting services and consultative services.

**aerial chart** see *aeronautical chart*

**aerial remote-sensing image** see *remote-sensing image*

**aerial view** see *bird's-eye view*

**aeronautical chart** In cartography, a specialized representation of mapped features of the earth, or some part of it, produced to show selected terrain, cultural and hydrographic features, and supplemental information required for air navigation, pilotage, or for planning air operations. Synonymous with aerial chart.

**affiliated library** A library which, as a member of a library system, is associated with other members of the system under common ownership or control, but which has its own board and maintains a high degree of administrative autonomy, such as a law library or medical library in a university library system.

**affirmative action** Systematic practices on the part of an employer to ensure that applicants are recruited and employed and that employees are treated without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, physical and mental handicaps, political affiliation, or other categorical criteria rather than established objective criteria.

**AG (average gradient)** see *contrast (1)*

**against the grain** Said of paper which has been folded or cut at right angles to the grain. Synonymous with across the grain.

**agent** An individual or company from whom, or through whom, library materials are purchased. Used most often to refer to the subscription agent, the intermediary who places periodical subscriptions and secures back issues of periodicals. Compare with *wholesaler*.

**agitation** The movement of photographic film, paper, or developing solution during processing to ensure maximum contact between the photographic material and chemicals.

**aide** A person who assists a superior staff member in the fulfillment of his or her duties by performing assigned tasks; frequently used to identify volunteer assistants in a library.

**air bells** Undeveloped spots that form on negatives or prints as a result of poor agitation during film processing. The defect is generally due to air bubbles that form in washing, preventing effective contact between the developer and photographic material. The term is sometimes used to describe tiny bubbles that form in optical glass.



**à la grecque** A style of binding with boards cut flush with the cut edges of the book and with headbands protruding above and below the boards; common on Greek printed books of the 16th century.

**albertype** *see collotype* (1)

**alcove** A recessed portion of a room enclosed on three sides by walls, partitions, or bookcases placed at right angles, and equipped to accommodate a small number of persons.

**ALGOL** A common international procedure-oriented programming language (algorithm-oriented language) designed for programming numerical computer applications.

**algorithm** A defined set of rules or instructions for solving a problem in a finite number of steps. Compare with *heuristic*.

**alienation** In archives, the act of transferring or losing custody or ownership of records to an agency or person not officially related to the institution or organization whose records are involved. (SAA)

**alkaline-buffered paper** *see permanent-durable paper*

**alkaline reserve paper** *see permanent-durable paper*

**all along** In binding, a style of hand-sewing in which the thread is passed through the fold and around every cord or tape all along the length of each section from the head to the tail kettle stitch. Synonymous with *one sheet on and one on*. Compare with *two along*.

**allocation** 1. The process of distributing the available financial, personnel, or material resources at the disposal of an organization for specified purposes and functions. The distribution may be based upon quantitative formulas or administrative judgment. 2. The plan resulting from the allocation process.

**allotment** The amount of resources assigned to units in an organization to perform specified functions or to be used for specified purposes.

**all-over style** In binding, a style of decoration in which a small, repeated pattern covers the whole of the side of the cover of a book (as distinct, for example, from a center-and-corner motif).

**all published** A note used in the description of a multipart item, the publication of which was started but was then discontinued or suspended.

**all rights reserved** A statement in a printed document indicating that reproduction in any medium of any work contained therein in whole or in part requires the consent of the copyright owner.

**almanac** 1. A compendium, usually an annual, of statistics and facts, both current and retrospective. May be broad in geographical and subject coverage, or limited to a particular country or state or to a special subject. Compare with *yearbook*. 2. An annual containing miscellaneous matter, such as a calendar, a list of astronomical events, planting tables, astrological predictions, and anecdotes.

**alphabetic code** A code which uses alphabetic letters to represent other data. Synonymous with *alpha code*. Compare with *alphanumeric code*, *numeric code*.

**alphabetico-classed catalog** A catalog in which the headings of bibliographic records are arranged alphabetically, but in which subject headings display the generic relationships of subjects, in the manner of a classification system. For example, the subject heading for a work on comets would appear as "Science—Astronomy—Comets." Compare with *alphabetico-direct catalog*, *classed catalog*.

**alphabetico-direct catalog** A catalog in which the headings of bibliographic records are arranged alphabetically and each subject heading expresses directly and specifically the subject of the work it represents. Synonymous with *alphabetico-specific catalog*. Compare with *alphabetico-classed catalog*.

**alphabetico-specific catalog** *see alphabetico-direct catalog*

**alphabetize** To arrange in alphabetical order. This may be done according to the letter-by-letter method, in which word divisions and punctuation are ignored (e.g., paper covers, papermaking, paper permanence), or according to the word-by-word method, in which entries having the same first word are arranged in the alphabetical order of the next word (e.g., paper covers, paper permanence, papermaking).

**alphabet length** The length in points of a complete lower case alphabet in any type face and