

BIC Standard Subject Categories & Qualifiers, Version 2

“BIC2”

Introduction and Overview

Background

BIC2 replaces the interim Version 1.1 which was released in August 2002, and which was limited to minor additions and relocations.

BIC2 constitutes the result of a full and thorough review of the BIC scheme, carried out in accordance with clearly defined aims and principles, which has produced some significant changes and advances.

Main Aims of BIC2

The stated aims behind BIC2 can be summarised as follows:

Removal of UK bias

The BIC scheme was originally conceived as a subject classification system for the UK book trade, which led to certain subjects being given an inflated degree of detail or prominence (eg English law) or being taken out of the objectively correct hierarchical sequence (eg British history).

BIC2 represents a re-positioning of the scheme as an international standard for the English language book trade.

Overhaul of key subject sections to meet users' needs

Certain subject areas within the BIC scheme have come in for particular criticism, as being outmoded or generally unsuitable for the users' needs. Most prominent amongst these were Law, History, Computing, Children's, Young Adult & Educational, and the combined Language/Literature/Biography section.

Convergence with BISAC

The equivalent scheme in the North American book trade is the BISAC Subject Headings. The long term aim is the unification of these two schemes into a single classification system for the English language book market. In this review, the BISAC scheme was checked and considered for every section, and, where suitable for BIC users' needs, any changes that brought the schemes closer together were adopted.

General Principles and Limits on Change

In addition to the above main aims, the following principles and restrictions were observed:

- All proposals received from users since the release of Version 1 were considered.
- Where possible, categories that held no intrinsic meaning but were there merely as “umbrella” headings for a group of related sub-categories were removed.
- The basic structure and coding system remains unchanged.
- No codes used in Version 1 or 1.1 were re-used with a (significantly) different meaning.
- Version 2 is released with conversion instructions for updating from BIC1.1.

Review Process

A Review Committee was established, with representatives from various sectors of the trade (academic & trade publishing, bookselling, library supply, and bibliographic agencies) who have direct experience and good understanding of classification issues. This committee first met on 12 July 2005.

Along with this small central committee, specialist working parties were set up to review specific sections, namely Section L Law, U Computing, and Y Children's, Young Adult & Educational.

Summary of Changes

The implementation of the stated aims and principles has led to some significant changes in the scheme, not least in its overall size. The number of Subject Categories has been *reduced* from 3574 categories in BIC1.1 to 2611 in BIC2, most notably in Section Y.

The major impact on each Section is summarised below.

Section A: The Arts

- Removal of obscure and little-used art styles in AC. Split of AF into distinct sub-sections AF and AG.
- Clearer distinction between academic/specialist "art book" material and general hobbyist material now located in WF.
- Division of unhelpful "Performing Arts" sub-section into more specific AN "Theatre Studies", AP "Film, TV & Radio" and AS "Dance & Other Performing Arts".
- "Antiques & Collectables" relocated to WC as more closely related to other Leisure and Lifestyle categories.

Section B: Biography & True Stories

- A new section composed of related categories "Biography" (previously CV), "Diaries, Letters & Journals" (previously CTK) and "True Stories" (previously FS).
- Autobiography now recognised as distinct from biography. A new category for "Memoirs" added.

Section C: Language

- Previous unwieldy section divided, with "Biography & Diaries etc" going to new Section B; and "Literature & Literary Studies" going to new Section D, leaving only Language-related categories here.
- Language Reference relocated from CG to CB.
- Old CX section deleted and handled through new "Reading Level & Special Interest" Qualifiers.

Section D: Literature & Literary Studies

- New section formed from old Section C.
- Much simpler approach for literary texts.

Section E: English Language Teaching (ELT)

- Some categories removed

Section F: Fiction & Related Items

- This section is "flattened out" with removal of umbrella headings, so that genres are now Level 2 headings.
- Split between "modern" and "classic" fiction defined as publication date c 1945.
- Expanded "Graphic Novel" sub-section at FX.
- "True Stories" relocated to new Section B.

Section G: Reference, Information & Interdisciplinary Studies

- "Geographical Reference", eg atlases and gazetteers, relocated here from RG.
- "Interdisciplinary Studies" reduced, with relocation of Cultural Studies & Media Studies to Section J.
- "Controversial Knowledge" relocated to Section J.

Section H: Humanities (History, Archaeology, Philosophy, Religion)

- Radical restructuring of HB "History" with separate sequences for region and period.
- Expanded list of specific events & topics at HBT; listing of specific wars under HBW "Military History".
- "Local History" relocated to Section W.

- A more balanced approach to HR “Religion” with reduction of Christian codes and expansion of other major religions. “Myths & Mythology” relocated to Section J.

Section J: Society & Social Sciences

- Old JB “Sociology, Social Sciences” sub-section broken up and significantly restructured to reflect fact that Sociology is a relatively narrow academic speciality and that many books on society, culture and social issues are of broader appeal.
- “Cultural Studies”, “Media Studies”, “Controversial Knowledge” brought in to new broad JF sub-section.
- New specialist “Sociology & Anthropology” subsection at JH and “Social Services & Welfare, Criminology” now at JK.
- To accommodate division of old JB sub-section, “Psychology” is relocated to JM and “Education” to JN. “Education” is significantly expanded.
- Minor changes only to JP Politics & Government and JW “Warfare & Defence”.

Section K: Economics, Finance, Business & Management

- Note addition of “Accounting: study & revision guides” at KFCX and “Banking & finance: study & revision guides” at KFFX.
- Old KM “Business & Management” relocated to KJ to allow for additions and re-structuring. Addition of “Business & management: study & revision guides” at KJBX.
- Relocation of various “Trades” categories from KN to Section T.

Section L: Law

- A radical overhaul with the removal of the old separate English, Scots and EU Law sections into a single, significantly re-structured sequence LN “Laws of Specific Jurisdictions.
- Note addition of “Law: study & revision guides” at LR.

Section M: Medicine

- Expansion of MQC “Nursing” sequence.
- Note addition of “Medicine: study & revision guides” sequence at MR.
- Relocation of most old MX categories to VX “Mind, Body Spirit”.
- “Veterinary Medicine” brought in at MZ from TW.

Section P: Mathematics & Science

- Generally, minor changes & increased compatibility with BISAC throughout.

Section R: Earth Sciences, Geography, Environment, Planning

- Generally, minor changes & increased compatibility with BISAC throughout.
- Old non-specific RGT “Maps, charts & atlases” distributed between new categories: GBG “Geographical Reference” categories, RGS “Geographical maps (specialist)”, but with the vast majority of folded maps (including Ordnance Survey) going to WTR “Travel maps & atlases” categories.

Section T: Technology, Engineering, Agriculture

- Generally, minor changes & increased compatibility with BISAC throughout.
- Relocation of various “Technical Trades” categories from KN.
- Relocation of old TW “Veterinary Science” to Section M.

Section U: Computing & Information Technology

- Radical and thorough overhaul to meet current demands of this fast-changing sector.
- Key features include UD “Digital Lifestyle” sub-section for technical consumer/user guides to Internet, PDAs, games, digital photography, etc.
- Revised UM “Computer Programming / Software Development” sub-section concentrates on type or purpose of programming rather than programming language. List of languages now too large and changeable to list.

Section V: Health & Personal Development

- A reduced and more focussed section, retaining only the old VF “Family & Health”, VS “Self-Help & Personal Development”, and an expanded VX “Mind, Body, Spirit” sub-sections. All others relocated to Section W.
- “Complementary Medicine” relocated to VX from Section M.

Section W: Lifestyle, Sport & Leisure

- A greatly expanded section bringing in all “leisure” sub-sections from Section V (namely WB “Cookery / Food & Drink etc”, an expanded WF “Handicrafts, Decorative Arts & Crafts”, WK “House & Home Maintenance”, and WM “Gardening”) and Antiques & Collectables” from Section A.
- Also features two new sub-sections WJ “Lifestyle & Personal Style Guides”, and WQ “Local Interest, Family History & Nostalgia” to handle abundant material previously not well-provided for.
- WT “Travel & Holiday” re-structured & expanded. Note that nearly all folded maps should be located here rather than at RGS.

Section Y: Children’s, Young Adult & Educational

- Radical and thorough overhaul to meet needs of this unique specialist sector. The previous Section Y was a micro-version of the adult scheme; the new Section Y is designed from the bottom-up to reflect the special features of children’s & educational material. Only YF “Children’s & Young Adult Fiction” remains largely unchanged.
- One obvious difference is the reduction of Section Y categories from 815 to 161, resulting in a much simpler, clearer section.
- Greater emphasis is placed on type or purpose of material rather than just the subject; thus all “Educational Material” is in YQ even though the same subjects may be covered in YN “Children’s & Young Adult General Non-Fiction”.
- Note addition of “Educational: study & revision guides” at YQZ.
- Upper limit for use of Section Y codes remains at minimum school leaving age (GCSE in England & Wales); approx 15-16 years for trade books.
- Note essential use of Reading Age/Level Qualifiers, especially with YF* codes.

Qualifiers

- Geographical Qualifiers: one addition.
- Language & Time Period Qualifiers: unchanged.
- Educational Purpose: 5 deletions including 4R “Study guides & revision notes”. These are now identified by specific Subject Categories (listed above), or by a new Qualifier 4KLR for A/AS level.
- Note addition of new Reading Level & Special Interest Qualifiers. These provide for the essential addition of age ranges for Children’s books; for the indication of special interest (eg Gay & Lesbian interest as distinct from Gay & Lesbian Studies); and for the indication of specific seasonal interest. The latter two topics increase compatibility with BISAC Merchandising Themes.

Timescale for Implementation

Nielsen BookData will be able to recognise and accept BIC2 values in ONIX files and other data supplies from end June 2006. It is recommended that BIC users convert to BIC2 by the end of 2006. As with all such significant developments, it is essential that data suppliers check with their recipients before implementing BIC2.

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BIC2 Review Committee

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