

An Information Service for Quantity Surveyors

By J Franks, MPhil, P/PIQS, ACI Arb, AMBIM, MIOB

It is perhaps an indication of the increasing importance of the quantity surveyor's role that during the late 1970's The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors commenced publication of a Quantity Surveying Supplement in addition to the monthly *Chartered Surveyor* and *QS Weekly*, a weekly newspaper exclusively for quantity surveyors, also commenced publication. Both the above mentioned publications are, of course, in addition to *The Quantity Surveyor* which was, for a number of years, the only significant publication exclusively for quantity surveyors.

In addition to journals and newspapers, the 1970's have also seen the development of information services designed specifically to meet quantity surveyors' needs, the latest of which is QUINDEX, an index for the practising quantity surveyor. QUINDEX is produced by the CIT Agency which is based at the Faculty of the Built Environment, Polytechnic of the South Bank, Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2JZ. Many quantity surveyors will already be

familiar with the Construction Industry Thesaurus, researched and produced by the same agency, with DoE support, and from which the agency receives its name.

The Need

Finding the most relevant and up-to-date documents to serve a current need is a problem which frequently faces the practising quantity surveyor, whether in private practice, local or central government service, education, research or one of the many branches of the profession in which the quantity surveyor finds himself.

Perhaps most large practices have specialists concerned with information retrieval in some form or another but smaller offices find it difficult, economically, to provide themselves with an information service such as that discussed below. It is estimated, for instance, that the creation of such an index would cost approximately £3,000 in staff time alone. It is obvious, therefore, that the small practice would, by using such a system, have access to infor-

mation which would otherwise be inaccessible to them, or accessible only through a circuitous route. The benefits of the index are not, however, only for the smaller office, because, by using such a system, larger organisations with, perhaps, a staff librarian would be able to relieve him or her of the chore of compiling an index of this type and thus allow him to devote a greater proportion of his time to answering enquiries of a more personal and specialised nature.

An Office Tool

The Quindex System really performs the function of an office tool, which gives immediate access to published information with a minimum of effort. The compilers of the system have provided indexes which enable information to be found from a number of different standpoints. These might be by subject descriptions, such as, for example, Bills of Quantities — by the names of persons associated with a particular document, for example, its author or by some other proper name having some relevance to the documents such as, for example, the Standard Method of Measurement, or, perhaps, the parties in a legal case.

The system is in three parts, which are illustrated in figures 1 to 3. The first part takes the form of a set of reference cards, one for each item of information (see figure 1). The second part is the alphabetical index of subjects — showing which articles deal with which subjects (see figure 2). The reference numbers given in the index refer to the numbers of reference cards for documents relevant to the subject of interest to the enquirer. The name index (figure 3) is similar in form to the subject index but gives references to authors, firms, Acts of Parliament, the parties to a legal dispute and the names of standard documents (conventions). All references link back to the set of reference cards, as shown in figures 4 and 5.

The sequence for finding information with Quindex is therefore:

1. Look up the subject or name which interests you in the appropriate index.
2. Follow up the references given in the set of reference cards.
3. Identify the articles, or other documents most relevant to your needs.
4. Locate the appropriate items in your library, or obtain from elsewhere.

The compilers of the system cover a wide range of periodicals and other publications in order to discover items of interest to quantity surveyors. They have taken the advice of the Quantity Surveyors Information Group on the question of which periodicals are of most interest to quantity surveyors and on many other questions

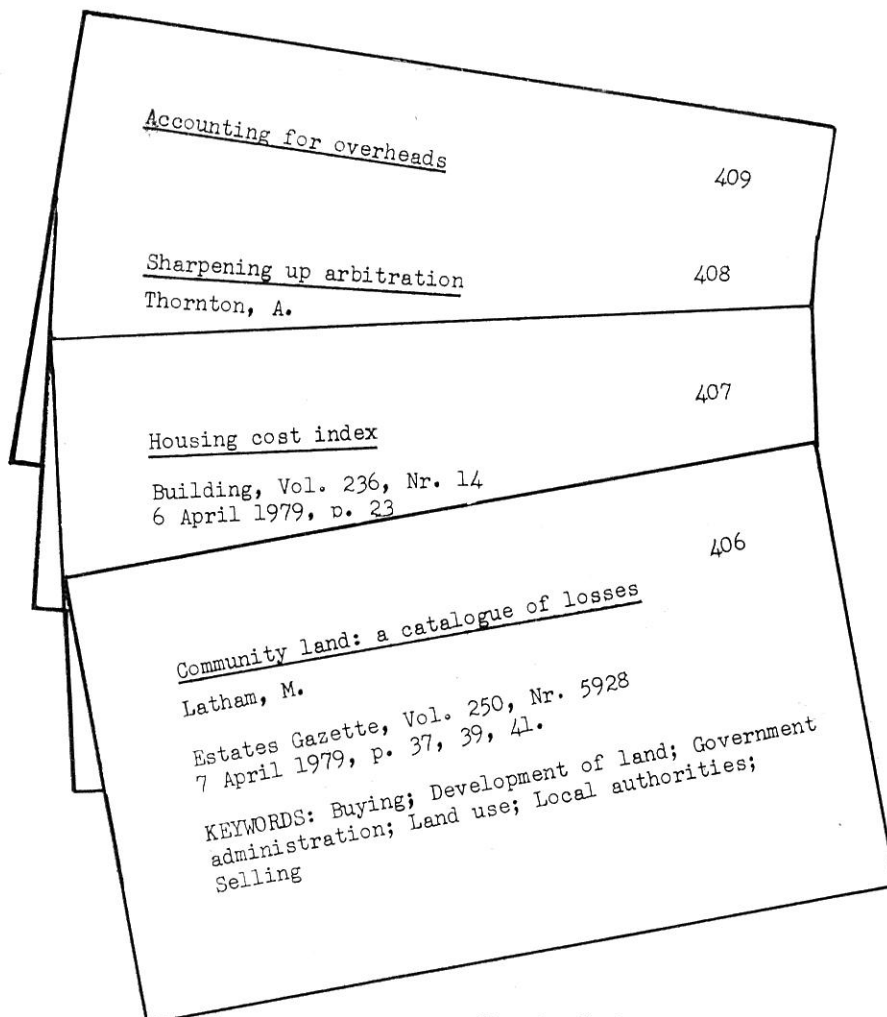


Figure 1 - Cards

Sims, John	409, 441
Skoyles, E.R.	476
Smeaton v Ilford Corporation, 1954	474
Smith, Geoffrey M.	411, 449
Stephenson, Douglas	405, 430
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Figure 3 - Name Index

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Figure 2 - Subject Index

GC/Works/1, Edition 2	417, 428
Gardiner, Leslie	432
Gilbert, John	439
Gilbert-Ash (Northern) Ltd v Modern Engineering (Bristol) Ltd, 1973	454
Gleeson (M.J.) v London Borough of Hillingdon, 1970	439
Goulden, Gontran	442
HVCA Standard Form of Sub-Sub-Contract clause 1-4	467
clause 5-9	468
Hadley v Baxendale, 1854	457
Howard, Rob	415
Hudson's Formula	409
Hughes, Geoffrey A.	
Humber, J. Roger	
ICE Conditions of Contract, clause 12	
ICOS (Gt Britain) Ltd	
IOB Studies in Contractual	
JCT Standard Form of Buildi clause 4	
clause 11	
clause 23	
clause 24	
clause 25	
clause 26	456
Killby and Gayford Ltd v Selincourt Ltd, 1973	454
King, E.H.	451
Knowles, Roger	421
Latham, Michael	406
Lenton, Jeremy	457
Lister v Romford Ice and Cold Storage Co Ltd, 1957	458

Figure 4 - Use of Name Index

Accounting for overheads

Sims, J.
Building, Vol. 236, Nr. 14
6 April 1979, p. 34

KEYWORDS: Building contracts; Contractors;
Contracts; Cost accounting; Overhead costs

relevant to the development of the Quindex system.

Monthly Up Dating

An aspect of Quindex which should be attractive to quantity surveyors is that it is updated monthly, and that "maintenance" of the system requires the minimum effort on the part of the subscribers. The reference cards and updated index referred to above are sent to subscribers monthly and each new index completely replaces the previous one and provides access to all the reference cards sent up to that date. It will be appreciated, therefore, that maintenance simply entails taking out last month's index and substituting the index which has just arrived. A cabinet to hold all the cards is included as part of the basic service.

Information Coverage

The system covers the full range of subjects central to the work of quantity surveyors, such as all aspects of cost, contracts and tendering, interim payments and final accounts, maintenance costs, professional practice and project management.

Supplementary Services

The compilers of the Quindex System appreciate that subscribers' information needs may be wider than those referred to above, and in order to provide for these supplementary needs a service is available which:-

- (a) provides a check-list of key new publications which have appeared during the month. (This check-list is sent out each month with the updated indexes.)
- (b) enables subscribers who cannot find any references to a subject which interests them in Quindex to call upon the compilers of the service to help

Price adjustment formulae	415
Production management	416
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Quantity surveying	411, 413, 414, 415, 418, 449, 475, 476
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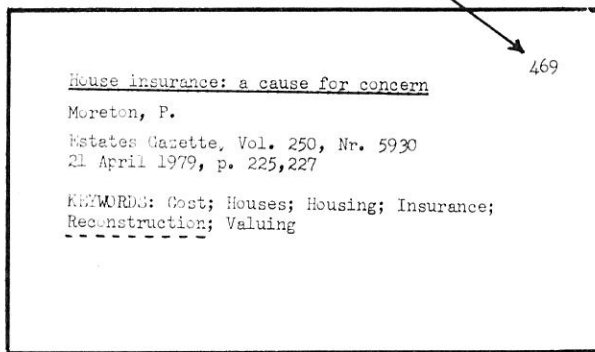


Figure 5 - Use of Subject Index

- (c) enables subscribers who find a reference to an article but do not possess a copy of it in their office to obtain a photocopy through the Quindex service.
- (d) makes it possible for particular classes of document to be provided by the compilers on a regular basis on agreed terms should the subscriber so wish.

Alternative Systems

Quantity surveyors are well aware that there is no shortage of information services, particularly with regard to building cost. Most of the technical journals which the quantity surveyor is likely to read contain cost data (usually published monthly) and it is interesting to note that the "Cost Data File", with which quantity surveyors reading *QS Weekly* will have become familiar, recently commenced publication as an entirely separate publication.

So what is it that sets Quindex apart from other systems?

- The compilers claim that the system:
 - (a) provides a completely new index every month so that there are no updating problems.
 - (b) that it is a "complete" system — no other equipment is needed.

- (c) that it provides specialised advice on quantity surveying information for quantity surveyors.
- (d) it provides many of the benefits of having an in-house librarian but at a fraction of the cost.
- (e) it provides a basic tool for those offices fortunate enough to have librarians of their own, thus leaving the librarian with more time to deal with specific enquiries.
- (f) Quindex provides the quantity surveyor with an information service at less than 1/10th the cost of a "private" system.

Over the years there has been considerable criticism of the lack of liaison between the Construction Industry, the associated professions and the academic establishments. The relevance of research to the industry's needs has often been questioned. No doubt much of this criticism is justified but the Quindex System provides one example of co-operation between a poly-technic, a non-profit making agency and practising 'professionals' with a view to identifying and meeting specialised information needs for the benefit of the industry as a whole.

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Building Business Unit

Survey of Pay Conditions in the Surveying Professions.

The above survey was commissioned by 'Building' last year and has been based on a random sample of one in five corporate members of the IQS and the RICS, Building and Quantity Surveying Divisions. The full report is available from the Building Business Unit, price £17.50, including VAT. It is not possible, in a few words, to draw any immediate conclusions since there are so many considerations to be taken into account. Salaries paid to the qualified member of the two major surveying bodies are similar at all levels and the survey indicates an increasingly prosperous profession with scope for high rewards.

assistance and illustrative matter provided by the CIT Agency.