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Australian Standard<sup>®</sup>

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**Information processing—Guidelines  
for the documentation of computer-  
based application systems**

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This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee IT/9, Information Systems—Vocabulary and Software. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 12 December 1990 and published on 28 March 1991.

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## PREFACE

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# Information processing—Guidelines for the documentation of computer-based application systems

## 1 Scope and field of application

This International Standard establishes guidelines for the documentation of computer-based application systems. It also contains checklists with the aim of supporting effective activities throughout the system life cycle.

The guidelines given in this International Standard have been developed with the aim of

- a) obtaining the necessary commitment of the parties involved with the development of the computer-based application system;
- b) contributing to the production of a well-planned, standardised system documentation;
- c) enabling the successive production of system documentation in parallel with system development.

Well-defined rules for documentation during the process of system development will facilitate

- a) the preparation of the documentation itself;
- b) estimation of the time and resources required for the achievement of a project;
- c) exchange of information between the parties concerned, resulting in
  - selection of attainable objectives for a system;
  - a more complete and well-considered functional design;
- d) making decisions and briefing of personnel during work on system development.

The system documentation produced in accordance with these guidelines

- a) enables the management to exercise control over the development process;
- b) enables users of the system to use it efficiently and correctly;
- c) enables computer operators to schedule and run the system;
- d) aids diagnosis and correction of errors or faults;
- e) provides information about the system as support for system maintenance.

This International Standard does not cover the requirements for documenting the hardware design of a computer-based application system.

## 2 Principles of documentation

### 2.1 General considerations

Despite the diversity of applications of computer-based systems, there are fundamental similarities, for example, the obvious feature that a computer is always subject to input, processing and output phases. There should always be a need to establish and justify the resources such as personnel, materials and finance necessary to develop and implement a computer project, however large or small, and to document adequately all aspects of the proposed system.

It is in this context that the guidelines established in this International Standard have been formulated; the aim being to establish a basic framework of documentation that would act as a solid base for any project and enable effective development and implementation through proper progress and control machinery, permitting the development to proceed in a planned and authorized manner.

The application of these recommendations will vary according to the type of system being introduced: as an example, methods of operating might assume greater importance in a process control environment than in, for example, a commercial batch processing system.

A particular document or piece of information may have no relevance to one system and yet be important to another. The checklists given in this International Standard should be used to ensure that, if information is omitted from the documentation, the omission is the result of a positive decision and not an oversight.

The gradual change in the level of detail in the development process may necessitate revision of documentation from earlier stages.

### 2.2 Types of information

Two basic types of information are identified in this International Standard, i.e. administrative and technical.

Administrative information is project control and management information which records what has been authorized and what has been done. This information should be retained but it may not be necessary to update it once implementation is complete.