BELL TELEPHONE LABORATORIES
INCORPORATED

SUBJECT: Colloquial Name for the USA Standard Code for Information Interchange - Case 39065

DATE: JUL 2 0 1967

FROM: D. A. Kerr

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE

ABSTRACT

The acronym "ASCII" is recommended as a colloquial name for the USA Standard Code for Information Interchange.

HO-3142

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In August of 1966 the American Standards Association was reorganized as the USA Standards Institute. At that time, the titles of all former American Standards were changed to "USA Standard . . . ", and the same format is of course to be used for all new standards promulgated by the institute.

During the development of the Standard Code for Information Interchange, the code itself and the embodying document were referred to by the acronym of the formal title, ASCII - American Standard Code for Information Interchange. This practice is quite common in ASA/USASI internal papers. Most such acronyms fade from usage with the approval of a standard, with the standard being subsequently referenced by its formal title, its reference number (as PH22.15-1966), or some other colloquial name (NEC - National Electric Code). In the case of ASCII, the "internal" acronym stuck, probably because it was unusually pronounceable. (One can hardly imagine the proposed standard being referred to in casual converstation as "USASGPAKAFII").

With the change in name of the standards, there has emerged a natural tendency to adopt the acronym USASCII for the former ASCII, but this should not be construed as mandatory, since in the present context it is much more a colloquial name with which we are concerned rather than the formal, if brief, nomenclature used in Institute documentation. Correspondingly, USASI Subcommittee X3.2 has by resolution encouraged its members and others to continue, if they wish, the use of the acronym "ASCII" for the code.

The same practice is recommended for Bell Laboratories' use wherever practical. In general, the custom is to omit the article "the" when using ASCII as a noun, as in "the control characters of ASCII." Of course, the article will appear when it and the acronym modify another noun, as in "the ASCII code table."

It is further recommended that, in formal documents or those intended for general distribution, the full title be referenced along with the reference designation when the term is first introduced, as "the character set of ASCII (USA Standard Code for Information Interchange - USAS X3.4-1967).

D. A. KERR

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