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TOPONYMIC DATA FILES: NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

U.S. Board on Geographic Names Alphabetizing and Sequencing
Rules for Geographic Names Files

Paper submitted by the United States

U.S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
ALPHABETIZING AND SEQUENCING RULES
FOR GEOGRAPHIC NAMES FILES

INTRODUCTION

The following rules are for alphabetizing and numerical ordering of
geographic names in federal files, listings and gazetteers. These rules
are not for the selection, application or formatting of any particular
geographic name.

NAME FORMAT

Before geographic names can be put into alphabetical/numerical order,
they must be arranged in data entry format. The majority of geographic
names in which the specific term is followed by the generic term are
already in data entry format.

> Examples: Red River
> Big Rock Hollow

1. Names in which a generic term precedes the specific term,
   however, are listed with the specific term first, followed by a
   comma, and then the generic term and any associated preposition
   and/or article.

   > Examples:
   > Adams, Mount
   > Ann, Lake
   > Woods, Lake of the
   > Nevada, Sierra
   > New Haven, Town of
   > Utah, State of

2. Names of populated places are always listed in reading order.

   > Examples:
   > Lake Placid
   > Mount Calvary

3. Physical-feature names which contain an initial definite
   article are treated in two different ways, depending on whether
   they are foreign or domestic names. In foreign
   physical-feature names and in the names of foreign countries,
   an initial definite article is reversed only if it is the
   English word "The." Non-English initial definite articles
   occurring in foreign physical-feature names are not reversed.
   In domestic physical-feature names, both English and
   non-English initial definite articles are reversed.

   > Examples:
   > Capitan, El
   > Drain, The
   > Mesa, La
   > Thoroughfare, The

4. Names containing Arabic numerals are treated two different ways, depending on whether they are foreign or domestic names. In foreign names, all Arabic numerals are spelled out, and if there are any generic terms in initial position, they are reversed. In domestic names, Arabic numerals are not always spelled out, and, when not, any initial generic terms are left in reading order.

Examples: Camp 22
           School Number 14
           Township 33

ALPHABETIZING RULES

1. Spaces, hyphens, periods, apostrophes, diacritical marks, parentheses, bracketed labels, and underlining are all disregarded.

2. Uppercase and lowercase letters are treated alike.

3. Roman numerals are letters of the alphabet and are treated as such.

4. Names containing both letters and Arabic numerals are treated as follows:

   a. Where the numerals are in initial position within a name, the sequencing is accomplished according to the numerical order of the number after the alphabetical sequencing of other names.
      A
      B
      C
      .
      .
      .
      Z
      1 Branch
      2 Creek
      23 River
      220 Town

   b. If a generic term precedes a numeral within a name, the sequencing is accomplished according to the order of the letters in the generic term and then according to the numerical order of the number after the alphabetical sequencing of other names.

      Camp Orinoco
      Camp Twenty
      Camp Yahoo
      Camp 22
      Camp 44

5. Special letters ae, ‡, ᶞ, ‡, ı, ⨊, ŋ, ø, ð, œ, ß, ‡, þ, and u which occur only in foreign names, are treated as ae, d, dh, h, i, l, n, o, o, oe, ss, t, th, and u, respectively.

SEQUENCING RULES

1. Geographic names are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters which occur up to a comma, if present, or to the end of the name, if a comma is not present.

2. Names with the same order of letters up to a comma are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters following the comma.

3. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters comprising the designation code (for foreign names) or the next subordinate level civil division (for domestic names).

4. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name and with the same designation code or next subordinate level civil division are sequenced by the numerical order of the feature's latitude from lowest to highest.

5. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name and with the same designation code or next subordinate level civil division and the same latitude are sequenced by the numerical order of the feature's longitude from lowest to highest.

Approved:
24 July 1987
U.S. Board on
Geographic Names