



When you're responsible for promoting the protection of life, property and the environment, your information needs to be 100 per cent accurate. So when the American Bureau of Shipping needed to find out the correct materials to make a small, rarely used mechanical part, they turned to the BSI Knowledge Centre for help.



“We need to know what standards say, and our integrity hangs on that. The Knowledge Centre is a very, very useful source of help.”

Howard Clayton
Technical Librarian
American Bureau of Shipping

Customer needs

- View specific foreign national standards
- Discover if any standards exist relevant to a particular topic
- Ensure rulings have an authoritative basis

Customer benefits

- Maintain a reliable professional service to clients
- Save cost of buying full standards
- Save cost of carrying out its own research
- Get quick answers to obscure questions
- Feel confident in the quality of the research

What the ABS does

For more than 150 years the American Bureau of Shipping has established rules for the design, construction and maintenance of marine vessels and offshore structures. ABS has a global network of surveyors to carry out checks on vessels. It also has a network of engineering offices that review ship designs to establish standards.

Why it needs standards

The ABS has a huge range of its own rules and requirements, but as technologies and materials evolve and new design features appear, it is often called upon to make a new assessment. If the need is big enough, the ABS will generally create a new rule for itself. But often the issue isn't substantial enough to justify that – yet still the ABS needs to make an authoritative ruling. That's when it needs to look around to see if other organizations have had a view on the issue, and that means looking at standards.

"What we sell is our professional expertise," says Howard Clayton, Technical Librarian at ABS. "So we see if something is covered by our requirements and if not we turn to recognized national or international standards. We hang our hat on national and international standards."

How the Knowledge Centre helps

There are two key ways that the BSI Knowledge Centre helps the ABS keep doing its work.

Firstly, despite the fact that the ABS has its own internal collection of standards, it often needs to refer to a standard that it doesn't have. For example, it may need to see what a German or Japanese standard says about a topic but can't justify buying the standard because only a small part of it is relevant.

That's when it will get in touch with the Knowledge Centre to call on the resources of its international standards databases. The Knowledge Centre staff will find the relevant standard and a member of ABS staff will be able to see if the standard has the information needed.

Secondly, the ABS often comes across a particular issue – quite likely an obscure one – where it doesn't currently have a requirement in place. For example, what kind of materials should a particular type of toothed gear be made from? What stresses can it be subjected to?

The first thing an engineer working on this issue will want to know is whether there's any recognized standard anywhere in the world that has laid down any rules for such a toothed gear. But because the ABS doesn't have access to standards from all over the world, it won't necessarily know from its own searches if there's a standard out there that it needs to see.

The Knowledge Centre researchers, however, do have that access, as well as the search skills to uncover any relevant standards. So when ABS asks for help, the Knowledge Centre is able to track down the answers – quickly, efficiently and reliably.

27 years and counting – an on-going source of help

Howard Clayton has been drawing on the BSI Knowledge Centre for nearly three decades. "In all those years not once have I come across someone who has not been helpful," he says. "I can give the highest possible recommendation to the Knowledge Centre. It's a very convenient service to use."



"At ABS we need to know what standards say, and our integrity hangs on that. The Knowledge Centre is a very, very useful source of help."

The Knowledge Centre's services are exclusively for BSI Subscribing Members. It's free and Members can use our skilled researchers whenever they need to, 09.00-17.00, Monday to Friday.

Find out how our Knowledge Centre experts can help you

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