



CIBJO: BLUE BOOKS

In October 2006, a district court in Munich, Germany, delivered a ruling with consequences that reverberated throughout the jewellery industry in the European Community and beyond. The verdict was triggered by a complaint brought against Gemsmart, the German distributor of the U.S.-based Gemesis Corporation, by Germany's Central Office for Control of Unfair Competition. It followed an advertisement placed by the company in the local press, which stated that "...cultured diamonds have the same chemical, optical and physical properties as their counterparts that were created in the ground. "

In its ruling, the German court demanded that Gemsmart cease calling synthetic diamonds "cultured diamonds." To provide teeth to its decision, it declared that if the German distributor violated the order, it would be subject to a very heavy fine. Repeated infringements could even lead to a jail sentence.

Explaining its decision, the German court said the term "cultured diamonds" was misleading. In future, the court added, the company can only refer to laboratory created diamonds as "diamonds" if the word is immediately preceded by one of the modifying adjectives, "synthetic" or "artificial."

Within CIBJO, the courts decision was most satisfying, for it provided reward for the hard work and dedication of its members. Not only was the original appeal to the Central Office for Control of Unfair Competition made by a local CIBJO official, but, in reaching their decision, the judges relied on the terminology and definitions contained in CIBJO's Diamond Blue Book. Article I, "The Definition of the Diamond. " Paragraph 3 of the Diamond Blue Book states: "It is prohibited to use the word 'diamond' to describe such products that have either partly or wholly crystallized or – re-crystallized due to human intervention, no matter which basic material or methods are used. Products made in this way can only be named as 'synthetic diamonds' when their structural, physical, and chemical properties correspond in their total mass to diamond. The word 'diamond' must then be clearly preceded by the terms 'synthetic' or 'artificial.'"

CIBJO developed its Blue Book system to advance the goal of universal standards and terminology in the jewellery industry. Currently the CIBJO Blue Books are definitive set of standards for the grading, methodology and nomenclature of diamonds, coloured gemstones, pearls and other organic materials and Precious Metals.

Initially the first three publications were printed with different coloured covers—blue for the Gemstone Book, grey for the Diamond Book, and green for the Pearl Book. Today, they are generally referred to as one single entity—the Blue Book.



Each book was compiled by CIBJO committees representing trade organizations and laboratories in the relevant sectors. The standards developed represent a consensus derived from the broad expertise on the subject within these committees and of those from outside the committees who have expressed an interest in participating in the development of these standards. The Blue Books are living documents that are always subject to review.

The application of the Blue Books standards is voluntary. However, CIBJO suggests that their standards should apply to all persons, partnerships and corporations at all points in the trade internationally. These standards should apply to the use of trade terminology during labelling, sales, merchandising, advertising and promotion. CIBJO has been actively involved in the development recognised sets of terminology by the International Standards Organization—or ISO. But this is a long and difficult process. In the absence of clear ISO-approved terminology, it is the CIBJO Blue Books that are most commonly referred to in official forums .

At the 2006 CIBJO Congress, updated versions of CIBJO's Diamond and Pearl Blue Books were ratified. Modifications were made to the Coloured Stone Blue Book, for which a new version had been ratified a year earlier.

Presenting the updated Diamond Blue Book to CIBJO's Assembly of Delegates in Vancouver, the outgoing Diamond Commission President Harry Levy said that the new document now reflected the current developments in the diamond jewellery market: "[It] has been re-written, simplifying things so that the consumer can easily understand the terminology used as well as understand how to read a grading report," he said.

At the 2008 CIBJO Congress in Dubai, Michael Allchin, the incoming president of the Precious Metals Commission, presented the Precious Metals Book which added yet another significant pillar to CIBJO's standards. Allchin said that "this is the first time there is an internationally recognised standard for the description and marking of precious metal jewellery, flatware and hollowware. The Precious Metals Blue Book covers standards for precious metals alloys, finenesses, weights, colours, tolerances, solders, coatings/platings and marking."

The Diamond, Gemstone, Pearl and Precious Metals Blue Books were all drafted in such a way so as to comply with the format used by the International Standards Organization. This also will be the policy used in the creation of Blue Book for the gem labs, which is currently being worked upon. This, it is hoped, will encourage the eventual formulation and acceptance of official ISO standards for the jewellery sector.