

ASAIB (Association for Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers) conference

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Are we on the same page?

Index to pass database evaluation: making the connection

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Overview

- Who are the indexers?
- Who are they indexing for?
- The evaluation
- The ideal database
- Two examples

Who are the indexers?

“Indexing is not a neutral and objective representation of a document’s subject matter but the representation of an interpretation of a document for future use.”

“The creation of the subject matter is based on the indexer’s social and cultural context”

Mai, J E 2001, “Semiotics and indexing: an analysis of the subject indexing process”, *Journal of documentation*, vol. 57, no. 5, pp. 591-622.

Jacques Savoy compared the retrieval effectiveness of human controlled vocabulary based indexing to that of automatic indexing using 10 retrieval models. Manually assigned descriptors that were mainly extracted from an authority list performed better than did an automatic indexing scheme. However, the difference between these indexing schemes is usually not statistically significant.

In order to provide effective access, various modern indexing and abstracting services (such as MEDLINE (MESH), PsychINFO, Chemical abstracts) make use of some sort of human subject analysis and indexing, often invoking a controlled vocabulary (e.g., Library of Congress Subject Headings).

Savoy, J 2005, ‘Bibliographic database access using free-text and controlled vocabulary: an evaluation’, *Information Processing and Management*, vol. 41, pp. 873–890.

I am surprised that librarians expect clients to learn their way of doing and thinking in order to use their systems. Library systems are not self-evident. Look at classification numbers, making use of a thesaurus.

Look at search behaviour of clients and index for that.

Who are they indexing for?

We need to take into account we are mostly indexing for the Net Generation. They are the generation that were raised with computers (Don Tapscott)

- Because of that, young people are familiar and comfortable with computer and digital technologies.
- Dependant on and prefer Google
- Library resources are difficult to figure out
- Want speedy answers and full gratification immediately

OCLC report – 2005 +2010

- Start information searches with search engines such as Google
- Satisfied with searches
- Self-serve
- Do not differentiate; trust both search engines and libraries equally(2005); do trust libraries more (2010)
- Use of 'Ask an expert' sites, such as WikiAnswers, increased dramatically over the past 5 years.

The evaluation

- **Content covered**
 - what level
 - peer reviewed
 - complete (no omission of graphs/tables)
 - years of coverage (back files)
 - regularly updated
 - what subject range is covered?
 - Any unique content
- **Appearance and product structure**
 - obvious where to start to search
 - clear navigational links
 - any special features, e.g. linkage to library catalogue or other databases
 - search functions, e.g. keyword, author title, subject, thesaurus
 - advanced searching
 - natural language searching
 - boolean searching
 - proximity searching
 - Phrase searching
 - Limiting (e.g. by year, publication type, language, full text, other)

- Combining search sets
- Is alerts and RSS feeds possible?

- **Full text options**
 - Any **omissions** from the text
 - **quality** of text, images and graphics

- **Display, save, print and export functions**
 - Are unlimited viewing, downloading, printing allowed?
 - Choice of formats for display?
 - which sort/ranking options are available? (alphabetic, chronological, relevancy)
 - can useful records be marked for printing, saving, exporting?
 - can the format for printing be specified?

- **Help facility**
 - help screens?
 - easily accessible and in plain English?
 - good examples?