

Indexing Consistency

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In the following exercise, I am studying the variance of indexing terms related to Nakata, Nakata, Gardiner, McKeough, Byrne, and Gibson's article "Indigenous Digital Collections: An Early Look at the Organization and Culture Interface."¹ My methodology included reading the article, attributing 3 keyword suggestions that could be used for indexing, and then comparing my manifestations to those of 3 other professional indexing services: LISS, ERIC, and Inspec.

The table below lays out the results from the reading and the indexing databases.

Indexes	My suggestions	LISS	ERIC	Inspec
Indexing	3 keyword terms: National History, Australia; Digitalization; Collections Management	Subjects: Local history -- <i>Australia</i> ; Local history materials -- Australia; Optical computing; Databases; Local history; Local history materials; Library materials -- Digitization; Libraries & Aboriginal Australians; Aboriginal Australians -- History; State libraries; Preservation of library materials; Intellectual property; Access to information; Public domain (Copyright law); Best practices; Copyright; Libraries -- Risk management; Library materials -- Selection for preservation	Descriptors: Indigenous Knowledge, Library Automation, Library Materials, Government Libraries, Archives, Access to Information, Preservation, Library Research, Foreign Countries, Performance Factors, Library Development, Standards Location Identifiers: Australia	Inspec controlled terms: copy protection - digital libraries Uncontrolled terms: indigenous digital collections - indigenous materials - state libraries - digitisation process Inspec classification codes: C7250Information storage and retrieval - C7210Information services and centres

¹ Nakata, Martin, Vicky Nakata, Gabrielle Gardiner, Jill McKeough, Alex Byrne, and Jason Gibson. (2008). "Indigenous Digital Collections: An Early Look at the Organisation and Culture Interface." *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* 39, no. 4: 223-236.

While reading the article a number of terms came to mind, and I selected the 3 that I thought best summarized and fit the contents, using Joudrey and Taylor's "An approach to subject analysis" and Nessel's "Indexing databases for our users, not ourselves"² as guides to select the most accurate term that would benefit the most users' searches. I decided to recommend the terms "National History, Australia"; "Digitalization"; and "Collections Management."

At first I reconsidered recommending the term "Indigenous Materials" rather than "National History, Australia", but the article itself taught me that my initial impulse was politically biased and incorrect. It became clear to me that the materials discussed in the article were not about a subsection or group of Australian culture, but the foundations of Australia's history and culture. Words have power. Though referring to the culture as a subculture might be more popular or broadly used decision, it carries with it a complacency towards perpetuating colonial hierarchies. It is the responsibility of librarians to revise and correct users (and ourselves) when we have misunderstood, and it is favorable to refer to a people by what they indeed are and what they name themselves. Thus, rather than perpetuating the tendency of creating a subculture of indigenous peoples, I thought it would be more appropriate to identify the materials as belonging to the main identifier of Australia. I was happily surprised that LISS also selected a progressive categorization in leading with "Local history – Australia", though LISS also includes later in its list the more potentially popular terms of "Aboriginal Australians" ("Libraries & Aboriginal Australians"; "Aboriginal Australians – History"). Many of LISS's subject terms are variations of this concept: "Local history materials – Australia"; "Local history"; and "Local history materials". ERIC's term "Indigenous Knowledge" is too specific for users and its "Foreign Countries" is too broad; This database offers no specific subject descriptor for the main content of the article—the cultural history of Australia; "Australia" is only a Location Identifier, yet its inclusion could be referring to the journal's title alone. On the other hand, Inspec offers only extremely specific terms for the article's content: "indigenous digital collections" or "indigenous materials".

² Joudrey, D. N.; Taylor, A. G.; (2018). *The Organization of Information*. 4th ed. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited. Appendix A. An approach to subject analysis (pp. 579-584); Nessel, V. (2018). Indexing databases for our users, not ourselves. *The Indexer* 36(3): 105-109.

The second term that I selected was “Digitalization”, which was a constraint theme throughout the article, and as a major issue in Library Sciences I thought that this term was adequate enough. LISS’s “Library Materials – Digitalization” is more precise and better than my selection; yet its offering of “Optical computing” is (I hope) obsolete terminology, and its term “Databases” is too broad. ERIC’s “Library Automation” is also obsolete sounding, but more problematically it is vague (it could be referring to an online catalogue system or an automated paging system, or any number of other topics). Inspec’s “digital libraries” is good, but more niche and possibly misleading because the article is discussing physical materials that are in the process of being digitalized, thus its “digitisation process” is accurate but perhaps too specific, as it is unlikely that many users would conduct a search using this particular phrase.

A wide spread of concerns are raised throughout the article including legal concerns, copyright, user access, restrictions, appraisals, contracts, preservation, and physical and intellectual ownership. All of these issues fall under the umbrella phrase of “Collection Management”. LISS alternatively offers many of the specific sections, which would be preferable if I were given the ability to include more terms, as I think users would be searching for articles that address specific problems such as these; “State libraries”; “Preservation of library materials”; “Intellectual property”; “Access to information”; “Public domain (Copyright law)”; “Best practices”; “Copyright”; “Libraries -- Risk management”; “Library materials -- Selection for preservation”. ERIC offers only terms that are too specific or too general: “Library Materials”, “Government Libraries”, “Archives”, “Access to Information”, “Preservation”, “Library Research”, “Performance Factors”, “Library Development”, “Standards”.³ Inspec offers only “copy protection”, “state libraries,” and its classification codes “C7250 Information storage and retrieval” and “C7210 Information services and centres”—which misses the article’s subjects by being either too specific or vague for users’ needs; Again, I can’t imagine a user discovering this specific article based only on these access points.

In order to better understand the variety of subjects/descriptors/keyterms offered by LISS, ERIC, and Inspec it is helpful to know more about these databases. LISS (Library Literature & Information Science Index) is a bibliographic database covering essential library and information science journals. Inspec is a database that specializes in scientific and technical literature fields

³ “Library Research” should be safely assumed subject, and not a term of specification unless it is the sole topic of an article, such as “How to do Library Research” or “Why Library Research is a Dying Art”.

of engineering, physics and computer science. ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) is an authoritative database of indexed and full-text education literature and resources. It makes sense then that LISS would seem to have the most relevant subject-term offerings, since the specialized subject of the article used in this case study would come under its cloak. It also makes sense then that ERIC would focus on broader concepts regarding libraries and government libraries and that Inspec would concentrate on specific technological access points.

In conclusion, I would argue that accurate, appropriate, and specific subject terms should be utilized equally by each in order to adjust to the interdisciplinary needs of users and evade the problem of “silo”-ing information. Prompted by the results of this study, I would recommend firstly that the databases integrate their subject terms, allowing the specialist indexers dominance to non-specialist (such as LISS would rule the library-science journals and Inspec would rule the technology journals), and secondly that they also actively pull terms from each other for the broadest offerings of useful-access points (and of course a deleting weak access points). This solution would allow users to search with the most accurate and appropriate terms rationally available, without obfuscation; by offering rich access points the article would enjoy being equally accessible through either of the 3 databases.