

Introduction

The Controlled Vocabularies Editorial Group (CVEG) is pleased to share its progress to date on reorganization and integration of the RBMS Thesauri.

A small group of members has been tasked with examining the existing thesauri, and developing a structure that is accessible, functional and extensible. Work on this project is ongoing, and the below outline should be considered an organic, work-in-progress. All comments and feedback are heavily solicited and greatly appreciated. Notably, we have opted to share progress in an unfinished form in an effort to promote transparency and gather community feedback at a relatively early stage.

Guiding principles

Although the CVEG has been informed by the previous structures of the existing Thesauri, the group has attempted a fresh look at the hierarchies in order to accomplish the following:

- Develop an extensible and accessible structure that is functional in a linked open data environment and lends itself to use in future bibliographic discovery environments.
- Fully integrate the six existing thesauri into a single, cohesive and comprehensively constructed controlled vocabulary.
- Evaluate existing terms and hierarchical structures to ensure clarity for users in application of terms and ensure individual terms represent wholly distinct concepts. Specifically, throughout the existing vocabulary, numerous sections suffer from a theoretical disconnect between whether terms refer to the physical embodiment of a thing or evidence of its usage. For example, users have often expressed confusion regarding terms such as “broken types” and “damaged plates.”

Approach

The CVEG has used a faceted analysis to construct the proposed structure. As such, each fundamental facet, analogous to a top-level hierarchy, represents an intellectually distinct and mutually exclusive category. Within each facet, terms are further subdivided for ease of browsing and discoverability. Although every effort has been made to allow facets to remain distinct, there are necessarily areas of semantic overlap. While each term represents an intellectually distinct concept, there will be numerous terms that will be contained within more than one facet. Because of this, the resulting vocabulary cannot be considered purely faceted in its construction, nor in any future faceted applications.

Additionally, the CVEG performed an “affinity test” at the ALA 2017 Annual meeting. Affinity testing starts with a subset of wordstock and asks users to develop organic groupings. The CVEG began with a random subset of terms from the Thesauri and, working in groups, asked visitors and committee members to develop proposed top-level hierarchies. The results of this work further informed the development of the below facets.

Although many of the existing hierarchical structures do have logical mappings within the new structure, it should be noted that the proposed hierarchies are informed by an effort to understand the terms as a cohesive, holistic vocabulary.

Facets

Works

Encompasses terms that categorize works by their intellectual nature

Objects

Encompasses terms describing physical objects

Production

Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes relating to the production of a physical resource.

Provenance

Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes indicating the provenance of a specific item.

Publishing

Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes relating to the publication of a resource.

Examples

- Works
 - SN*: Encompasses terms that categorize works by their intellectual nature
 - Function of work
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing works defined or classified primarily by serving a specific purpose at the time of issuance or creation.
 - Literary form
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing works characterized by a specific category of literary composition
 - Content of work
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing works defined or classified by specific content.
 - Humorous works
 - Musical works
- Objects
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing physical objects
 - Binding evidence
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing evidence pertaining to the binding of an object that are not the binding itself.
 - Binding errors
 - Bindings
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing physical instances of materials, structures or other evidence of bookbindings
 - Bindings by material
 - Binding styles
 - Materials
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing component materials of physical objects.
 - Paper
 - Physical form
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing works defined or classified by their physical characteristics or defining aspects of their physical embodiment.
 - Albums
 - Alphabet wheels
- Production
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes relating to the production of a physical resource.
 - Printing evidence
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes relating to the printing of a physical resource.
 - Type evidence
 - Characters or spacing matter

- Classes of type
 - Format
- Provenance
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes indicating the provenance of a specific item.
 - Physical amendments
 - Markings
 - Provenance labels
- Publishing
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing evidence or processes relating to the publication of a resource.
 - Conditions of publication
 - SN*: Encompasses terms describing variations in aspects of resources originating after their publication.
 - Versions of works
 - SN*: Encompasses terms denoting versions of intellectual works