



Dissertation Defense

Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science

“Bridging the Gap Between Search and Engineering Domain Content:
A User Focused Assessment of Controlled Vocabularies” by Ashleigh Pirone

Date: November 12, 2021

Time: 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Place: https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2fytizDr4cXRyDk

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Abstract:

Search, revise, and repeat. This is the habit in which users often find themselves when searching through repositories which aggregate dispersed content. Unfortunately, frustration, rather than success, is often the result of search goals, with estimates ranging from 36-45% frustration in knowledge intensive search environments (“SAE Digital Library Survey,” 2014; Field & Allan, 2009). To be faced with a repository of information and not find one’s desired knowledge is not a new dilemma. In the last ten years, the literature shows that knowledge organization has unfortunately suffered from outdated methods and practices, some ramifications being an emphasis on browse rather than search user preferences, outdated or offensive terminology, underestimating user natural language, and not emphasizing user-centered design. Most scholars advocating for change within the library classification space, do not suggest doing away with subject indexing, but updating the indexing process to better accommodate users’ expectations for a “Google-like search” without loss of the specificity of precision offered by subject indexing. This explored to what degree-controlled subjects differ from users’ natural language, finding through goodness of fit chi square assessment that overall the terminology does not match users language in the subset of terms analyzed. The findings from the user-focused card sorting survey are then used to suggest minor updates to the controlled terms to better align them with users' natural language in anticipation of making the users information retrieval satisfaction more effective.