2011

Review of Structures for Organizing Knowledge: Exploring Taxonomies, Ontologies, and Other Schemas

Yuezeng Shen
Cleveland State University, y.s.yang@csuohio.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl_facpub

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Original Citation

Repository Citation

https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl_facpub/48

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Michael Schwartz Library at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michael Schwartz Library Publications by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.
This article was originally published in:


Post-print prepared by MSL Academic Endeavors, the imprint of the Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University (2012)
From cataloging and classifying books, journals, and other media in the library and online, to developing and managing databases, to arranging files on personal computers or on our office computer networks, to sorting information on diverse websites, organization is a fundamental part of knowledge management today. But how do we organize objects so that they make sense and are useful? What role do categories, classifications, taxonomies, and other structures play in the process of organizing? What do information professionals need to know about organizing behaviors in order to design useful structures for organizing knowledge?

June Abbas’ new book *Structures for Organizing Knowledge: Exploring Taxonomies, Ontologies, and Other Schemas* answers these key questions by investigating three different types of structures for organizing knowledge: traditional, personal, and socially-constructed. Using this approach, the volume explores the role structures such as classifications, taxonomies, ontologies, and other schemas play in organizing knowledge and information.

Abbas’s “traditional structures for organizing knowledge,” which is dealt with in Part I, includes not only the cataloging structures used in libraries, such as MARC records, subject headings, and classification schemes, but also less familiar traditional structures, such as those from natural sciences.

Accordingly, part I examines historical development of taxonomies and the current research, theories, and applications related to organizing knowledge and examines a wide spectrum of issues, such as formal and informal structures; early taxonomists and their
contributions; cataloging codes; classification schemes; standards and best practice; descriptive
cataloging; metadata schema standards; classification schemes.

In addition, part I also analyzes the contributions of the structures in fields such as library
and information science, philosophy, natural science, and cognitive science to organizing
knowledge, and discusses how these structures have been preserved or adapted to the digital
environment.

By “personal structures for organizing knowledge,” which are explored in part II, the
author has in mind the systems developed by individuals at home and at work. Here, the author
introduces research findings from library and information science on knowledge organization,
human information behavior, and human-computer interaction in terms of personal information
management, and scrutinizes research in related personal knowledge structures.

Part III focuses on “socially-constructed structures for organizing knowledge,” which
include primarily “bookmarking and social cataloging” structures that have developed recently
or are beginning to emerge as the result of individual and collaborative uses of social networking
Web sites. Issues discussed in this part include social networking, bookmarking, and cataloging
sites; tags, tagging, and folksonomies.

The intended audience of this book includes both students of library and information
science and the practicing library and information science professional, as well as researchers in
library and information science and related fields. It is not designed as a "how-to" guide for
developing, applying, or implementing structures for organizing knowledge, but rather as a
conceptual discourse that inspires thinking about issues related to knowledge organization.

This volume is well written and is very readable for the intended readers. Every chapter
includes a box of focus points, figures that illustrate the structure in the chapter, a conclusion,
thought exercises, references, and a list of helpful websites. There is also an index of tables, figures, names, and terms used in various chapters, which creates a web of cross referencing links to various chapters in the book. This makes the material more accessible to the intended academic and research audience, and thus greatly assists them in reading and understanding the issues it investigates. Thanks to these reference features, the book also qualifies as a reference book on serials management in libraries.

Yuezeng Shen
Head of Cataloging
Cleveland State University Michael Schwartz Library