

An Alternative Scheme for Farradane's Relational Indexing

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Studies in librarianship have shown that current methods of subject analysis are inadequate because indexing systems either lack flexibility or completeness. Farradane (1980) proposes a technique in which the relations between index terms would be encoded into the bibliographic data for that document. To be useful, the system must handle all conceivable subjects, which are limited only by human thought, and so it should be based on a framework of the mind.

Farradane fails to provide an acceptable set of relations that could be used in this way, largely because there remains a problem of finding meaningful associations between terms. Farradane's system could be greatly enhanced by using the principles of syntactic theory; in particular, the substitution of theta roles as the set of relations in the indexing scheme.

Language is the tool that people use to articulate thought, and it is a system that is both hospitable and expressive, i.e., it can be used for any topic and it can express all relations for that topic. Syntactic theory and theta roles are designed to closely mirror the way that humans use language, and thus, they are a natural fit for bibliographic indexing.

This paper demonstrates how thematic roles could be combined with indexing to create an improved method of subject analysis, thereby exploring a contribution that linguistics can make to the study of library and information science.

Farradane, J. (1980). Relational indexing, part I. *Journal of Information Science*, 1, 267-276.