

An Approach to Exploring Subject Headings and Classifications

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Subject headings and classifications are two different tools for subject search. However, they are similar in the sense that (a) both have index terms, (b) both involve relations between index terms, and (c) both types of terms relate to documents in bibliographic databases.

Today's typical Internet users rarely know the differences between these two tools, and sometimes they don't even know that subject headings exist. Consequently, it would be useful to develop a unified interface that allows such users to search both subject headings and classifications at once.

We present an approach to treating subject headings and classifications as the same tool by taking advantage of the fact that each is a type of conceptual system. In this approach, a user can explore subject headings and classifications as concepts and then search for documents related to the concepts.

We have developed two prototype systems called (a) Subject World and (b) Mobile Subject World. Both systems display BSH4 subject headings and NDC9 classification index terms as concepts, and they are designed to search Osaka City University's OPAC.

The main difference between Subject World and Mobile Subject World is that the former system visualizes the relationship between concepts and documents using concept maps while the latter system lists concepts and documents in a format that fits the limited size of mobile phone displays.

We present how our systems display BSH4 subject headings and NDC9 classifications as well as their general operation.