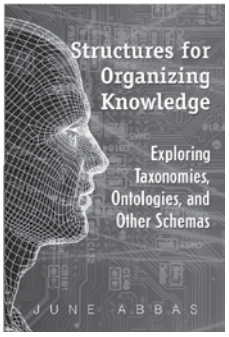
Reviews

Submissions and suggestions for reviews should be submitted to the Editor, *keywords@asindexing.org*.

June Abbas. *Structures for Organizing Knowledge: Exploring Taxonomies, Ontologies, and Other Schemas.* Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010.



The subject of knowledge organization systems (taxonomies, controlled vocabularies, thesauri, etc.) is not new, but the techniques, tools, technologies, and applications are growing and changing, so a new book with a comprehensive treatment of this field is most welcome. The books I have recently reviewed for *Key Words* in this subject area have been somewhat specialized, such as on taxonomies for the business enterprise or controlled vocabularies for museum objects. *Structures for Organizing Knowledge*, as the title suggests, gives a broad treatment of knowledge organization systems. While it does not provide detailed instructions on how to create a taxonomy or another type of system, the comprehensive and thorough coverage puts taxonomies, controlled vocabularies, and other classification schemes into perspective and context, and thus is a very informative book.

In its subject scope, *Structures for Organizing Knowledge* comes closest to a book I reviewed back in 2007: *Organising Knowledge: Taxonomies, Knowledge, and Organisational Effectiveness*, by Patrick Lambe. The difference between the books is where they turn to applications and examples. While Lambe, a consultant in knowledge management, draws heavily on his own experience for case studies in enterprise implementations, Abbas, as a professor of information science, goes into more detail in library science and biological science applications, yet she also discusses personal (in addition to professional) applications of knowledge organization systems. Finally,

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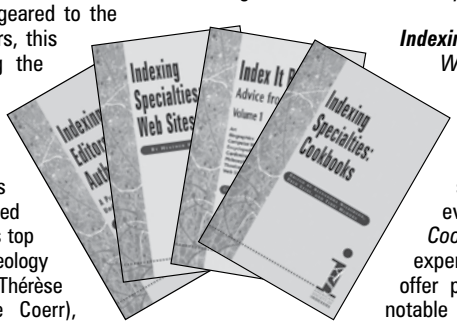

Indexing Specialties: Web Sites—Heather Hedden offers straightforward, get-it-done advice, bringing everything you need to know to create great web site indexes together in one place. She covers cutting-edge tools and techniques and demonstrates how to create index pages, index entries, indentations, hyperlinks, and cross-reference links. If you have already begun to meet the growing demand for web site indexes, here's a rich source of expert advice and support. If you've yet to create your first index on the web, have no fear: This reassuring guide makes it seem easy! **ASI member price $32***

Indexing Specialties: Cookbooks—As Julia Child said in *The Way to Cook*, "A reference or teaching book is only as good as its index." Indeed, readers and users of culinary books and cookbooks have long known the value of a good index—whether for locating a certain recipe, searching for ideas on how to use specific ingredients, or planning menus for special events. The 13 chapters in *Indexing Specialties: Cookbooks* discuss the importance of subject matter expertise, analyze the indexing needs of cookbook users, offer practical advice on writing quality indexes, review notable published indexes, and recommend other helpful sources. Also included is an Introduction by editor Alexandra Nickerson, who has been indexing cookbooks for more than 30 years and whose vision made this book possible.
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as this is a newer book, *Structures for Organizing Knowledge*, is additionally up to date with treatment of organizing structures for social knowledge (social networking, and social bookmarking).

The intended audience of *Structures for Organizing Knowledge* comprises both students and practicing professionals in the field of library and information science, although Abbas does mention students first. This work definitely can be used as a textbook, as she suggests in the preface. Each chapter includes a few "Focus Points" questions at the beginning and "Thought Exercises" at the end. But for one who is not a student, I did not feel that the text was inappropriate for me. Having indexed both textbooks and scholarly books, I would say that this book comes closer to a textbook (but at the graduate level).

Structures for Organizing Knowledge is organized into three parts, which the author calls "threads": (1) "Traditional Structures for Organizing Knowledge," which includes library classification systems, subject headings, thesauri, metadata schema, and discipline-specific structures; (2) "Personal Structures for Organizing Knowledge," which includes organizational structures in personal or home spaces and in professional or work contexts; and (3) "Socially Constructed Structures for Organizing Knowledge," which discusses organizational structures, such as folksonomies, in social networking, social bookmarking, and social cataloging sites. A concluding chapter compares and evaluates each of these "threads" of knowledge organization structures and also looks at possible inter-relationships among the three.

What is interesting in this approach is that the corporate or enterprise taxonomy is not presented as an application of a traditional controlled vocabulary or thesaurus customized for an organization, but rather as an extension of the less formal personal knowledge organization system. Abbas explains that traditional structures of organizing knowledge tend to be rigidly structured and follow industry standards. Personal or professional organizational structures are less rigid or formal. From my experience in helping design enterprise taxonomies, I would agree that enterprise taxonomies do not necessarily have to follow established guidelines, and they are also very user-focused. (This does not mean, however, that a specific enterprise taxonomy should not have guidelines of its own.)

The entire field of information knowledge, and its components of taxonomies, controlled vocabularies, classification schemes, etc., does not have standard definitions, and there are different perspectives to understanding them. As a professional taxonomist, I found Abbas's definitions acceptable, but some of the categorization different than what I have come to understand. She distinguishes between controlled vocabularies and classification systems as distinct kinds of structures. Furthermore, she divides controlled vocabularies into two types: subject headings (used for general knowledge, such as in libraries) and thesauri (used for subject specialties). A different perspective that I am familiar with classifies thesauri as more specific types of controlled vocabularies, which have greater structure. Indeed thesauri tend to be subject specific, so Abbas can be correct, too.

In dealing with the subject of organizing knowledge, the book is very well organized itself. In addition to the three parts and eight chapters, the table of contents reflects the heading structure down to the third level within each chapter. Most chapters begin with a section "Introduction and Scope of the Chapter" and end with a "Conclusions" section. The text makes good use of numbered and bulleted lists. The preface and the introductory chapter both lay out and explain the organization of the book, with the preface also explaining the purpose, scope and audience. The introductory chapter starts off laying the groundwork with definitions for "structures" and "knowledge or information." *Structures for Organizing Knowledge* also contains many resources. Each chapter has an extensive bibliography and a list of websites referenced in the text, and the text additionally makes good use of graphical images, tables, and screenshots.

The index is adequate, but could be better. It makes use of cross-references and subentries, and does not have too many undifferentiated locators. However, instead of double-posting, it only uses *See* references, even when the target entry of the reference has no subentries. The index could also be a little bigger/deeper, as some topics (such as "indexing", which is briefly mentioned) seem to be missing.

Structures for Organizing Knowledge is a thorough and well-written book that I would recommend to anyone interested in the subject. Not only does it provide a solid coverage of knowledge organization systems, but it also provides original analysis that is thought-provoking. While it does not provide step-by-step instructions on how to create a taxonomy or thesaurus or set up a social tagging environment, the book does help with the bigger question of what type of organizational structure to adopt in different situations, and whether some hybrid approach could be used. The book is not especially relevant to indexers per se, and the connection between controlled vocabularies or thesauri and indexing is mostly absent in this book. Any indexers, however, who have a professional interest in knowledge organization structures, would find this a very informative and intriguing book.

— *Heather Hedden*

April Michelle Davis. *A Guide for the Freelance Indexer.* The Editorial Freelancers Association, December, 2012

For anyone who entertains the idea of learning to become a successful freelance indexer, *April Michelle Davis's* new book, A Guide for the Freelance Indexer is a must-have for one's reference shelf.

Davis's approach to presenting the information is logical and easy to follow, beginning with the obvious question, "what is an index?" and taking

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