Outline of today’s lecture

1. General principles of hierarchical classification
2. Different kinds of classifications (including facet classification proper)
3. Next week’s lab and tute exercises

1. What does it mean?

Eric Hunter (2000: 1) defines classification as:

“the grouping together of like things according to common qualities or characteristics”
1. Key concepts — hierarchy

‘A large business or work unclassified or uncharted is not a worthy organization but mere material from which a clever brain may construct one. It differs in efficiency from the ideal as a mob of men differs from a well disciplined army’

(Melvil Dewey, quoted in Olson 2004: 605)

Hierarchical classification systems tend to privilege one aspect of sameness (i.e., one facet) over others. As a consequence, individual entities within such a classification system commonly belong to some wider group (and may in turn contain further subdivisions).

1. Defining a classification system

A means of segmenting the world by space and/or time, through

- ‘consistent, unique classificatory principles’
- ‘mutually exclusive’ categories
- ‘total coverage of the world it describes’

(Bowker & Starr 1999: 10-11)
1. Mutually exclusive categories...

are a standard feature in hierarchical classification systems:

- No dinosaurs that are both 'bird-hipped' and 'reptile-hipped'
- No buildings that are also rooms
- No invoices that are also receipts

1. General principles — facet analysis

Kennedy and Schauder (1997: 293) define facet analysis as

'A method for constructing a thesaurus and classification scheme which depends on grouping terms into facets'.

What then, is a facet?

1. General principles — the role of a thesaurus

Kennedy and Schauder (1997: 301) define a thesaurus as

'An alphabetical list of allowed and non-allowed terms, usually with cross references to link the non-allowed and allowed terms, and to suggest suitable related allowed terms.'

A thesaurus identifies the classification system’s controlled vocabulary, and its relationship to other relevant (but 'non-allowed') terms.
1. General principles — controlled vocabulary

‘A controlled vocabulary is an established list of standardized terminology for use in indexing and retrieval of information. An example of a controlled vocabulary is subject headings used to describe library resources. A controlled vocabulary ensures that a subject will be described using the same preferred term each time it is indexed and this will make it easier to find all information about a specific topic during the search process’

(Library & Archives Canada, n.d.)

1. General principles — key terms (BT etc)

Broader term denotes the wider set of which the current term is a subset.
Or to use Rowley’s definition (1996: 486), it is
‘a term that represents a concept that is broader than the specified term’.

1. General principles — key terms (NT)

Narrower term denotes a subset of the current term.
Or to use Rowley’s definition (1996: 486), it is
‘a term that denotes a concept which is narrower than the concept described by another term’.
1. General principles — key terms (RT)

**Related term** denotes another term within the hierarchy that belongs to the same subset as the current term.

According to Rowley (1996: 494), it is ‘A term that is coordinate to another term ie at the same level in the hierarchy’.

1. Relationships within hierarchies

As Olson (2004: 613) notes, hierarchical schema can sometimes have their disadvantages:

‘There is not a way to represent the relationship between Shakespeare and Keats as there is to represent the relationship between dogs and poodles’.

**How can we represent ‘Shakespeare’s influence upon Keats’?**

1. General principles — key terms (SN)

**Scope notes** help to establish boundaries and relationships within classification systems, by defining the meaning of particular terms. They typically:

– state what the term covers
– state what the term doesn’t cover, and
– provide reference to other relevant terms
1. What to do with synonyms?

According to Rowley (1996: 496), a synonym is 'a term with the same or similar meaning to another term'.

So why do anything with them within a hierarchical classification system?

1. General principles — key terms (USE)

Identifies which preferred controlled vocabulary term to use in the case of synonyms

- canteloipe ✅
- rockmelon ✗

Rockmelon — USE Canteloipe

1. General principles — key terms (Use for)

Helps to identify synonymous terms which are not part of your controlled vocabulary

Canteloipe — USE FOR Rockmelon
2. Different kinds of classifications

According to Kwasnik (1999: 25),

'A true hierarchy only has one type of relationship between its super and subclasses and this is the generic relationship'.

Key points here include inclusiveness and inheritance.

According to Kwasnik (1999: 30), a tree

'divides and subdivides its classes based on specific rules for distinction just as in a hierarchy but does not assume the rules of inheritance'.

Facet classification in the strict sense of the term was pioneered by S. R. Ranganathan, the man who once defined a document as ‘a record on a more or less flat surface’.

Facet classification seeks to combine a multiplicity of facets in its representation of the terms within a classification system.
Facet classification

is defined by Hunter (2000: 14) as an approach that
‘breaks down or analyses subjects into constituent elements and then leaves it to the classifier to construct classification numbers for more complex subjects by combination or synthesis’.

3. Next week’s lab and tute exercises

• In the lab, you will be constructing your own classification schema
• In the tute, each group will compare its classification schema (and participate in the discussion around the week’s readings)

4. Further reading