Bruno & Richmond’s (2003) article, *The Truth about Taxonomies*, can be summed up in three points. It defines the taxonomy, it explains how an organization can use and develop taxonomies and it identifies types of taxonomies. A definition provided by Bruno & Richmond (2003), states that a taxonomy “*is the science of classification according to a pre-determined system, with the resulting catalog used to provide a conceptual framework for discussion, analysis, or information retrieval*”.

After carefully reading and analyzing this article, I came to the conclusion that taxonomies are everywhere and are vital to the organization of our information. Most organizations use some form of structure to manage their paper documentation (Bruno & Richmond, 2003). Whether it is effective or not, is a different story.

The article observes the fact that in many organizations, there are no guidelines or procedures as to how their repositories of corporate information and knowledge are to be handled. This shows a significant vulnerability in the information’s’ security and integrity, which appears only to be addressed when a crisis hits and information is breached or lost.

According to Bruno & Richmond (2003), most organizations exhibit a lack of standardized procedures, a “*stovepipe*” approach to information process, a lack of an information-sharing culture, and a proliferation of legacy systems. This can prove to be a considerable problem when it comes to locating, accessing and using the information in its many forms. In an ideal world, since we live and work in an environment that is largely dependant on information, there should be well-defined structures to manage information that is synchronized and consistent with all the other computers or shared drives.

Bruno & Richmond’s (2003) article then goes on to explain what taxonomies provide, which are identification, discovery and delivery. It is then suggested by Graef (2001) that “*a taxonomy should also inspire trust. The user should feel confident that the taxonomy will help him find the information he seeks….*” This portrays the veracity that
a well structured taxonomy can inspire this trust and also achieve these three basic functions. In achieving this, information can be identified and filtered controlling the surplus and also improve retrieval processes. The use of a controlled vocabulary augments the searches for information and also provides an easier way to guide our way through the search, and maybe invoke serendipity.

In explaining the two most widely known classification theories (generic relationship and whole-part relationship), we can see where these taxonomies are found and generally used. Consequently, it helps us understand the types of taxonomies provided and attribute ourselves to the pros and cons of each. Bruno & Richardson (2003) suggest five ways of representing information within taxonomies: functional, department, subject, product/services, and location; each with its own highlighted assets and drawbacks. In looking at these types of taxonomies, we can see the basis of these classifications and where they fit into the bigger picture, that is, the organizational environment.

It is my belief that taxonomies can be very effective and that organizations do not spend nearly enough time or effort to recognize how vital information management is. Bruno & Richardson (2003) hit this issue at the core and analyzed this subject matter in depth. This is evident throughout the article and in their question as to why do organizations not give more time and attention to the management of this important asset? Information is the fuel that keeps an organization running smoothly. (Bruno & Richardson, 2003).

In comparison, the article The Corporate Taxonomy by Woods (2004) agrees with the pressing matters concerning information management and believes that since the “world does not fit easily into neatly labeled boxes”, those that manage and are responsible for the information must have an “understanding of why taxonomies matter and how they can be used to improve information retrieval and navigation”. With today’s organizational society being ignorant to the value of information and its classification processes, we can only guess as to the state in which corporate information
is in. Unless something is done about it, the consequences in terms of time and accessibility may be devastating.

Comparing to a third author, I have come to realize a trend in the key issues discussed: “Taxonomies are one of the key tools being used to organize content” (Plosker, 2005). Three authors definitely emphasize importance to this issue, and also link in to the significance of using a controlled vocabulary and thesaurus.

Overall, Bruno & Richardson’s (2003) article was very informative and useful, however I did find the primary definition provided quite difficult to comprehend primarily, but the alternative definition provided was clearer to understand and interpret. The language was quite suitable for this type of article, and in most aspects, easy to read, although certain theories could be explained in a clearer manner.

It highlights some appealing and interesting arguments as to how we, as information users, need to classify, and brings to view, the next and larger level: the organization. Although the points made in the article were every extensive and beneficial, it only touched the area of the consequences in one or two sentences. This could stand to be developed on as it would be the finishing ‘cherry on top’ as to why we need taxonomies. We have been told what a taxonomy is, how an organization uses and types of taxonomies, but not why an organization would desperately need to use it to begin with. Without the consequences, how are we to know whether it is an urgent need or even why to bother with such an immense task of classification? Without knowing what that final “crisis” may be, could it really be that bad if it hits?

The discussed matters explored in the previous leads us to ask the questions, is a good taxonomy all we need to manage our corporate information and reduce our frustration in using it? Why do we need it? Is there a better way, and if there is, can it meet todays organizational needs? One can only hope.

[1000 words]
Bibliography

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