This critical review evaluates Bruno and Richmond’s approach to the issues of information management in organisations. "The truth about taxonomies" mainly discusses about issues and effective application of taxonomies in organisations. “Taxonomies are structures that provide a way of classifying things into a series of hierarchical groups” (Graef, 2001). Taxonomies according to Bruno and Richmond, assist to “control the glut of information and identify where information should be stored by filtering, categorizing, and labeling information” and it is all aimed to provide improved information management and access.

According to Bruno and Richmond, a taxonomy, a logical and efficient classification schema to manage a glut of information, is relevant to organisations where they are holding a large amount of information. Moreover, information being one of the most important assets to organisations, it is not too much to say that taxonomies determine their future. Development and application of the “right” taxonomy for each individual organisation is a significant issue which determines the ability and capability of an organisation. Information, the valuable asset to organisation “needs to be controlled, managed and used …efficiently and effectively” (Griffin, 2005). Graef (2001) also argues the significance of taxonomies saying that “a growing number of content owners and business unit managers are beginning to realize the value of taxonomies to improve access to information, leverage existing content to create new products and services, and facilitate electronic commerce”. He also argues that taxonomies need to be integrated and customized for a variety of business applications to exert its effectiveness.

Bruno and Richmond (2003) raise the issue that despite the significant needs for well-defined and documented structure “in today’s information-dependent environment where we are receiving, accessing and using information in many forms”, the reality is that there is “no guideline or procedure for how these repositories of
corporate information and knowledge are to be handled” and also “no one discuss the need for better management of information until crisis hit”. Griffin, (2005) National Service Line Leader for Deloitte Information Dynamics practice in United Sates also agues about the reality and consequence of poor information management saying that “companies were not thoughtful about the structure and architecture designed to store their data” and now they are facing difficulty keeping up with massive amount of information, often resulting in “data chaos”. As Bruno and Richmond show, in real situations, it seems to be the usual case that the framework for information management is not well-established in organisations despite the needs. Or even if there was an established taxonomy, the effectiveness and relevance to the live business, where situations and needs are constantly changing, is questionable.

As an approach to those information management problems, Bruno and Richmond argue for the importance of effective policies and standardised procedures which assist the development of taxonomies. They provide the suggested steps to follow in developing a taxonomy and emphasise the importance of its continuous development. Taxonomies should continue to develop over time incorporating new needs as the world around changes, such as change in terminology that is commonly used or emergence of new types of information which does not belong to any of the existing categories. In order to ensure a taxonomy’s continued value to an organization, there have to be policies and procedures which assist to precede the development process by specifically outlining things like “who owns the taxonomy and at what level will an end user or content manager be able to add, if allowed at all, a heading”. There also should be a mechanism that user dissatisfactions or new needs will be reported and reflected in the taxonomy. For that, the taxonomies’ developing, revising and refining processes should be monitored, and as mentioned before, should be controlled by well-defined policies and procedures. In the end, Bruno and Richmond conclude that “by using the standards and principles set out for the development of a hierarchical structure, … more efficient information retrieval, better productivity, and less user frustration can be achieved”.

Bruno and Richmond are not noting anything extraordinary. Their arguments seem quite reasonable having clear understanding of the current problematic situation
and the effective approach that should be taken. Some opponents of taxonomy claim that taxonomy is very defined and lacks flexibility. Bruno and Richmond do acknowledge the case and argue the importance of evolutionary development process of taxonomies and they claim taxonomies should be continuously revised and refined in accordance with the changes in situations.

In theory, their arguments about the evolutionary developing process of taxonomies sounds fairly practical. However the question is whether the evolutionary development process for taxonomies is feasible. It could be applied to small systems where there is a well defined need and users are sharing similar basic ideas. However it is perhaps not applicable for big complicated systems with numerous users from various backgrounds, nations and cultures having all different preferences. It will be very hard to go through the process and keep all users satisfied with the taxonomy developed or refined. The taxonomies development process would take considerable amount of time, money and engagement of the people who are involved. Usually the cases are taxonomies evolve too slowly whereas the world changes much faster. It would be quite difficult to keep taxonomies updated so that they incorporate continuous changes and new needs for large systems.

Moreover, even if well defined policies and procedures which clearly instruct continuous review and refinement of taxonomies were established, as Bruno and Richmond pointed out by themselves saying that “no one discuss the need for better management of information until crisis hit”, having this kind of relaxed general trend, what are the chances of people faithfully follow the policies and procedures?

Furthermore, if taxonomies keep changing, it will be difficult to convince users to use it. Presumably there would always be users who will not be familiar with the new structure of the taxonomy or in very large organisations there would be people who are not informed about the latest changes. Unless organisations are able to train all the users until they get used to the given taxonomy whenever there are changes, it is not possible to have a single taxonomy which satisfies every single user. In my opinion, in order to fully satisfy all the users, there have to be the same number of taxonomies as there are different users.

Policies, standardised procedures and continuous development of taxonomies are not the total solution. What they can actually do is to alleviate or minimise the
problems caused by inflexibility of taxonomies. Nevertheless, well-written policies and procedures are the cornerstone in developing and refining taxonomies which provide efficient information management and access. Bruno and Richmond’s suggested steps in developing a taxonomy will help to develop a well-structured and sound base of a taxonomy which is extensible for new requirements in the future, and the continued development of a taxonomy will lead to its continued value to an organisation. In despite of the issues involved in Bruno and Richmond’s suggested approach of continuous reviewing and updating of taxonomies, following the well-defined policies and procedures could certainly reduce the users’ frustration or dissatisfaction to some extent, achieving improved information management and access. In sum, "The truth about taxonomies", providing a framework for a taxonomy development process, is a useful resource for organisations which need improved information management. The basic development process for taxonomies supported by effective policies and procedures should be practiced by organisations who must customise the framework to their individual requirements and business practices. If it is successfully done, “taxonomies will realize their potential as strategic assets” (Graef, 2001) and the organisations’ business efficiency will be improved.