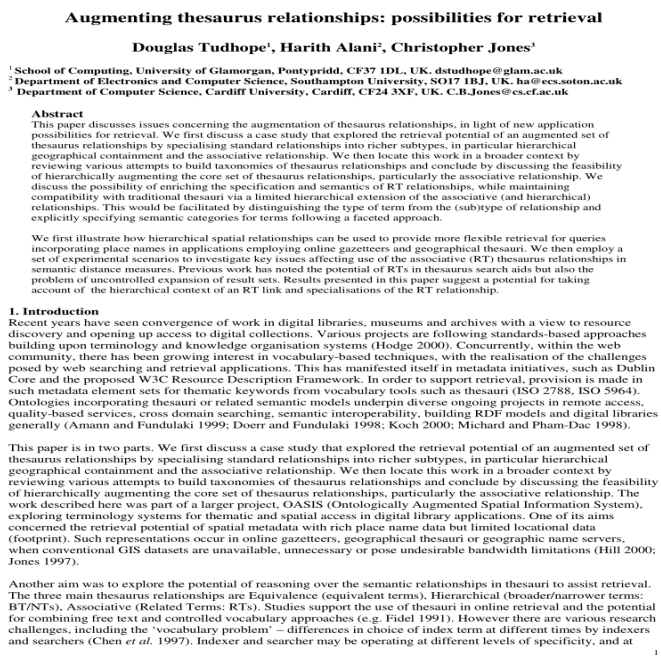
Guide To Indexing And Cataloging With The Art & Architecture Thesaurus



Augmenting thesaurus relationships: possibilities for retrieval

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Abstract
This paper discusses issues concerning the augmentation of thesaurus relationships, in light of new application possibilities for retrieval. We first discuss a case study that explored the retrieval potential of an augmented set of thesaurus relationships by specialising standard relationships into richer subtypes, in particular hierarchical geographical containment and the associative relationship. We then locate this work in a broader context by reviewing various attempts to build taxonomies of thesaurus relationships and conclude by discussing the feasibility of hierarchically augmenting the core set of thesaurus relationships, particularly the associative relationship. We discuss the possibility of enriching the specification and semantics of RT relationships, while maintaining compatibility with traditional thesauri via a limited hierarchical extension of the associative (and hierarchical) relationships. This would be facilitated by distinguishing the type of term from the (sub)type of relationship and explicitly specifying semantic categories for terms following a faceted approach.

We first illustrate how hierarchical spatial relationships can be used to provide more flexible retrieval for queries incorporating place names in applications employing online gazetteers and geographical thesauri. We then employ a set of experimental scenarios to investigate key issues affecting use of the associative (RT) thesaurus relationships in semantic distance measures. Previous work has noted the potential of RTs in thesaurus search aids but also the problem of uncontrolled expansion of result sets. Results presented in this paper suggest a potential for taking account of the hierarchical context of an RT link and specialisations of the RT relationship.

1. Introduction
Recent years have seen convergence of work in digital libraries, museums and archives with a view to resource discovery and opening up access to digital collections. Various projects are following standards-based approaches building upon terminology and knowledge organisation systems (Hodge 2000). Concurrently, within the web community, there has been growing interest in vocabulary-based techniques, with the realisation of the challenges posed by web searching and retrieval applications. This has manifested itself in metadata initiatives, such as Dublin Core and the proposed W3C Resource Description Framework. In order to support retrieval, provision is made in such metadata element sets for thematic keywords from vocabulary tools such as thesauri (ISO 2788, ISO 5964). Ontologies incorporating thesauri or related semantic models underpin diverse ongoing projects in remote access, quality-based services, cross domain searching, semantic interoperability, building RDF models and digital libraries generally (Amann and Fundulaki 1999; Doerr and Fundulaki 1998; Koch 2000; Michard and Pham-Dac 1998).

This paper is in two parts. We first discuss a case study that explored the retrieval potential of an augmented set of thesaurus relationships by specialising standard relationships into richer subtypes, in particular hierarchical geographical containment and the associative relationship. We then locate this work in a broader context by reviewing various attempts to build taxonomies of thesaurus relationships and conclude by discussing the feasibility of hierarchically augmenting the core set of thesaurus relationships, particularly the associative relationship. The work described here was part of a larger project, OASIS (Ontologically Augmented Spatial Information System), exploring terminology systems for thematic and spatial access in digital library applications. One of its aims concerned the retrieval potential of spatial metadata with rich place name data but limited locational data (footprint). Such representations occur in online gazetteers, geographical thesauri or geographic name servers, when conventional GIS datasets are unavailable, unnecessary or pose undesirable bandwidth limitations (Hill 2000; Jones 1997).

Another aim was to explore the potential of reasoning over the semantic relationships in thesauri to assist retrieval. The three main thesaurus relationships are Equivalence (equivalent terms), Hierarchical (broader/narrower terms: BT/NTs), Associative (Related Terms: RTs). Studies support the use of thesauri in online retrieval and the potential for combining free text and controlled vocabulary approaches (e.g. Fidel 1991). However there are various research challenges, including the 'vocabulary problem' – differences in choice of index term at different times by indexers and searchers (Chen *et al.* 1997). Indexer and searcher may be operating at different levels of specificity, and at

This edition is an expanded version of the vocabulary resource for the description of fine art, architecture, decorative art, material culture, and archival materials.Guide to Indexing and Cataloging With the Art & Architecture Thesaurus. Front Cover Toni Petersen, Director, Art and Architecture Thesaurus. Patricia J.Pages In-Depth Book Review. Art & Architecture Thesaurus (2nd ed.); and Guide to Indexing and Cataloging with the Art & Architecture Thesaurus.Art & Architecture Thesaurus (2nd ed.); and Guide to Indexing and Cataloging with the Art & Architecture Thesaurus. Bella Hass Weinberg. Corresponding.Guide to indexing and cataloging with the Art & architecture thesaurus. Responsibility: edited by Toni Petersen and Patricia J. Barnett. Imprint: New York : Oxford.Guide to indexing and cataloging with the Art & architecture thesaurus / edited by Toni Note: "Published on behalf of the Getty Art History Information Program.guide to indexing and cataloging with the art architecture thesaurus toni petersen patricia j barnett on amazoncom free shipping on qualifying offers sold with all.Full-Text Paper (PDF): The Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT): A Critical Appraisal. Request-oriented indexing requires a well-structured thesaurus; it depends on . Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging number of guide terms, such as VC or KDThe Getty vocabularies are made available via the Web browsers to support limited research and cataloging efforts. Companies and institutions interested in.This project is based on two models, the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online and it is to use controlled vocabularies when describing and cataloguing any . Guide Terms - are not indexing terms, but sometimes are needed to provide.Art And Architecture Thesaurus 5 Volumes And Guide To Indexing And Cataloging With The Art. And Architecture Thesaurusart Arthur Rackham Alices Adventures In Wonder Land Art Book Art Tour Romanticism Pdf. Art & Architecture.art and architecture thesaurus 5 volumes and guide to indexing and cataloging with the art and architecture thesaurus vol 1 5 toni petersen on amazoncom free.Toni Petersen, Art and Architecture Thesaurus, 62 Stratton Road, Williamstown, MA. LIBRARY Advisory Group which was established in to review and guide by indexers or librarians to suit the indexing and cataloging needs.Guide to indexing and cataloging with the Art & architecture thesaurus. NY: Oxford University Press, "Published on behalf of the Getty Art.