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authority file

A file, typically electronic, that serves as a source of standardized forms of names, terms, titles, etc. Authority files should include references or links from variant forms to preferred forms. For example, in the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF), “Schiavone, Andrea” is the preferred name form for a Dalmatian artist active in Italy during the sixteenth century, while “Medulić, Andrija,” “Lo Schiavone,” and several other forms are listed as variant names. Authority files regulate usage, but also provide additional access points, thus increasing both the precision and recall of many searches.

controlled vocabulary

An organized collection of words, phrases, and/or names, structured to show the relationships between terms and concepts. A controlled vocabulary is usually limited to a particular domain or set of concepts, and designates a *preferred form* or heading for each concept, person, or entity represented. **Authority files** and **thesauri** are types of controlled vocabularies, but a simple picklist can also be controlled.

folksonomy

An assemblage of concepts, represented by terms and names (called “tags”), the result of social tagging. Note that a folksonomy is not a taxonomy.

ontology

A formal, machine-readable specification of a conceptual model, in which concepts, properties, relationships, functions, constraints, and axioms are all explicitly defined.

social tagging

The decentralized practice and method by which individuals and groups create, manage, and share terms, names, etc. (called “tags”) to annotate and categorize digital resources in an online “social” environment. A folksonomy is the result of social tagging. Also referred to as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing, mob indexing, folk categorization.

tagging

In the context of the Web, the act of associating terms (called “tags”) with an information object (e.g. a Web page, an image, a streaming video clip), thus describing the item and enabling keyword-based classification and retrieval. Tags – a form of user-generated metadata – from communities of users can be aggregated and analyzed, providing useful information about the collection of objects with which the tags have been associated

taxonomy

An orderly classification that explicitly expresses the relationships, usually hierarchical (e.g., genus/species, whole/part, class/instance), between and among the things being classified.

thesaurus

A type of controlled vocabulary in which each entry or record is restricted to a single meaning (unlike a dictionary), and in which hierarchical semantic relationships (whole/part, genus/species, equivalence, and associative relationships) are explicitly expressed in the structure of the vocabulary itself.