

Ideological biases in indexing

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There is a distinction between biases reflected in the choice of terms to be included in the thesaurus, and between the process of indexing, in which the indexer selects from the thesaurus the terms that will represent a specific document.

We will examine biases by the indexer during the process of indexing.

There are two alternative approaches to indexing; a document-oriented approach and a user-oriented approach. With the first the indexer attempts to select words that will accurately reflect the content of the document. With the alternative the indexer attempts to take into consideration the expected user.

To the best of our knowledge, biases at the stage of indexing, i.e. when selecting terms from a given thesaurus, were not studied before. We will examine the influence of the indexer's political views on choice of terms for indexing documents. If true, it is a bias from the professional norm, according to which the indexer should not let his/her political views to be expressed.

The study questions are: Are selections of terms for indexing an item influenced by the indexer's own political views? Is, and to what extent does such bias result from the indexer's intention to reflect the political views of potential users?

The study will be conducted among academic libraries Information specialists/ Librarians in Israel that have agreed to fulfill a political views questioner. We will compare the indexing of the same terms, indexed from the united catalogue (ULI), by different indexers from different libraries.

The study is important for understanding how to address biases in indexing, a process that is aimed to be unbiased.