About the JSTOR Thesaurus

JSTOR holdings cover a wide array of subjects. The JSTOR Thesaurus is a subject thesaurus comprised of the combination of several and varied source thesauri or controlled vocabularies. Not every term from each source thesaurus was maintained. The resultant term list was arranged into a well-formed thesaurus compliant with NISO Z39.19 standards. Total number of terms as of this writing: Preferred or primary terms total 48,705; Non-preferred or synonym terms total 40,286.

The JSTOR Thesaurus is an English-language thesaurus; it is not intended to be able to index content in other languages. Generally, commonly used non-English terms covering concepts in the thesaurus are added as synonyms; exceptions are cases in which the foreign word has come into standard usage in a discipline (e.g., Dasein, a German word used by Heidegger that, even in English translation and writing about Heidegger, is never translated) and has been added to the thesaurus as such. British spellings are treated as synonyms.

Using the Thesaurus
The Thesaurus terms are integrated into the JSTOR search index to enable more precise results when a search term is entered by a user. The terms are labeled as "Topics" in the search results list and at the document level. The thesaurus terms, or topics, can be used to further narrow a search within the subject area and they are also linked to "topic cards" to provide the user with more context around a concept. A term must appear at least three times within a document before indexing will be triggered and a maximum of ten terms/topics are displayed. A rule base, within the thesaurus software, helps to further contextualize concepts when necessary. Note that due to length, some documents will not have topics assigned.

Updating Policy
In order to keep the subject indexing relevant to our content and to users’ search terminology, we have developed a maintenance plan. JSTOR Metadata Librarians will periodically review data such as user search logs and new content releases to maintain efficacy. We also have reviews by Subject Matter Experts as to the correctness of changes made to the Thesaurus. A feedback loop, which users can access, appears at the document level where users can flag topics as inaccurate. The taxonomy team reviews feedback submissions daily and makes changes or updates accordingly. Comments and suggestions for the JSTOR Thesaurus should be emailed to the Senior Metadata Librarian at sharon.garewal@ithaka.org.

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