Seeking Subject Matter Experts for the JSTOR Thesaurus

JSTOR frequently looks to our community for subject matter expertise in the various disciplines our database covers. In order to keep the subject indexing relevant to our content and to users’ search terminology, we reach out to subject matter experts (SME) in the field, and ask if they can volunteer their assistance in reviewing relevant branches in our thesaurus.

How the Thesaurus is Integrated on JSTOR

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 (Example: http://www.jstor.org/stable/43500912 -- you can see the topics listed above the first page of the article that is displayed). 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 and discoverability around a concept. A term must appear at least three times within a document before indexing will be triggered and a maximum of ten topics are displayed. A rule base, within the thesaurus software, helps to further contextualize and disambiguate concepts when necessary.

For context, a “term” would be a subject keyword like “cinematography” or “animated films”—important concepts that one might want to find a research article on. Currently, we do not include named entities such as people and places within our thesaurus.

Goals for Subject Matter Experts

SMEs volunteer to spend 2-4 hours reviewing subject areas (i.e. branches) with an eye towards the following:

- Identify concepts or groups of concepts that are currently missing
- Suggest rephrasing of concepts if they are appropriate for the subject area
- Suggest synonyms and acronyms that are important for the subject area
- Suggest changes to the hierarchy to reflect the current state of the field
- Point out any misspellings, errors, or oddities found in the thesaurus

Here is a link to a brief JSTOR video about SME work that may be helpful to provide further information and context on the thesaurus. If being a SME is of interest to you please email our Senior Metadata Librarian, Sharon Garewal at sharon.garewal@ithaka.org. A brief call will be set up to go over the subject area you would like to review and a spreadsheet of terms for consideration will be provided.

Thank You

JSTOR is grateful to all of the SMEs we have worked with and we are excited to continue working with SMEs to further deepen and expand the thesaurus. Your assistance will help JSTOR end users hone their searches and discover more relevant content more quickly.

Last updated September 2017, Sharon Garewal