

# Factors Influencing Subject Cataloging of Monographs: An Experiment in Indexing Consistency / Kedar Rochelle

## Abstract

This study has undertaken to examine indexing of monographs for subject access in Israeli public library catalogs, as this is a relatively new activity for librarians in the public library and school library sectors. The Thesaurus of Indexing Terms (1996), intended for post-coordination, was developed for and has been in use in Israeli public and school libraries since 1996. The purpose of the study was to discover trends in the indexing of monographs by means of inter-indexer consistency testing and by an in-depth analysis of mistakes in indexing. Following similar studies, and in accordance with the ISO standard "Methods for the Examination of Documents, Determining their Subjects and Selecting Indexing Terms" (ISO 5963-1985), a list of nine possible mistakes was formulated. A sample of 50 non-fiction monographs from all subject areas, published in Hebrew in 1997, was randomly selected. A panel of three experienced indexers indexed these, in order to establish a single correct indexing record for each of the monographs. The same monographs were then indexed by 16 library science students (non-experienced indexers), who had participated in a semester course in indexing, but possessed no or very little previous indexing experience. The 800 indexing records of the non-experienced indexers were compared to the correct indexing record for each book and indexing consistency was measured using two different formulas used in previous inter-indexer studies. The first formula measures the level of consistency of a pair of indexers, by the terms chosen by both indexers. The second formula takes into accounts those terms chosen by one indexer, but not by the other indexer. According to the first formula, the non-experienced indexers achieved an overall average consistency of 45.21%. According to the second formula, the overall average consistency was 32.88%. These results are in keeping with results of similar studies. An examination of the mistakes in the indexing records prepared by the non-experienced indexers revealed that the most frequent mistake (45.32% of all non-experienced indexers' mistakes) was the assignment of indexing terms to minor subject matter (i.e., subjects which were less than 20% of the content of the book). The second most frequent mistake was the

