



# BS 8723 : a new British Standard for structured vocabularies

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# Existing thesaurus standards

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- ISO 2788-1986 Guidelines for the establishment and development of monolingual thesauri  
= **BS 5723:1987**
- ISO 5964-1985 Guidelines for the establishment and development of multilingual thesauri  
= **BS 6723:1985**



# What needs updating?

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- Printed *versus* electronic application
- Guidance on management software
- Interoperability:
  - Mapping between thesauri and other types of vocabulary
  - Formats/protocols for data exchange with downstream applications
- Parlance of today, not 1970s



# Procedural aspects

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- Constituting a working group for an international standard takes a while
- It seemed easier to work first on the British Standards; then offer these up to the international community
- The BS committee must be UK-based, but invites international input wherever possible without offending BSI/ISO



# Procedure in detail

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- Small UK Working Group of unpaid volunteers submits drafts to BSI committee IDT/2/2
- Comments are invited informally from everyone interested
- Progress is very slow... but worthwhile, we hope



# Outline of new standard

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- BS 8723: Structured vocabularies for information retrieval – Guide
  - Part 1: General
  - Part 2: Thesauri
  - Part 3: Vocabularies other than thesauri
  - Part 4: Interoperability between vocabularies
  - Part 5: Interoperability with applications



# Progress to date

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- Drafts of Parts 1 and 2 soon to be issued for public comment
- Draft chapters of Part 3 exist, including Classification schemes, Taxonomies, Subject heading lists, Ontologies, Search thesauri
- Work has started on Part 4
- Part 5 to follow the rest



# Part 4: Interoperability between vocabularies

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- Huge demand for accessing information that has been indexed with another language and/or vocabulary – the buzzword is ‘Mapping’
- Part 4 to include multilingual thesauri as a special case of mapping between vocabularies
- The challenge: organise what we know in our bones about mapping in diverse situations, into one coherent standard





## Issues for Part 3

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- Part 3 must provide a basis for Part 4, i.e. pick out the characteristics of different vocabulary types that govern when and how you can map them
- But should it also be a standard for how to build those different vocabularies?
- And should it provide clear definitions for the different types?



# Part 3 chapters

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- Classification schemes
- Subject heading lists
- Taxonomies
- Ontologies
- Semantic nets (?)
- Search thesauri

# Part 5: Interoperability with applications



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- Vocabularies must work with
  - Search engines
  - Content Management Systems
  - Web publishing software, etc.
- Build on existing formats and protocols for data exchange
- e.g. Z39.50 and Zthes, XML schema? DTD? Any other ideas?



# Want to get involved?

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- We very much need wider input, so please join in!
- Email us at [SDClarke@LukeHouse.demon.co.uk](mailto:SDClarke@LukeHouse.demon.co.uk)