In the first section, controlled vocabularies are discussed. To paraphrase, the two main problems in controlled vocabularies are that synonymy is the concept of many words for the same idea, while polysemy is basically the opposite, that one word could have several different ideas (3). One of the most interesting things is this: “the presence of a word in a document does not always mean that the document is about what the word refers to” (3). Then Richard Jackson gives the definition of what a controlled vocabulary is, which is “a specialized indexing language created for the purpose of representing the subjects of documents in an IRS” (3).

Next Mr. Jackson looks at descriptors and how they differ from database to database. It is very easy to see why students and people in general get frustrated when searching for things. Each database that you search in requires, at least partially, a different vocabulary. The solution to this, says Jackson, is to have coordination. What this is, “is the combining of multiple terms to express the aboutness of a document” (7).

To accomplish coordination, there are two ways. One way is pre-coordination and the other is post-coordination. The following paragraphs will define, compare, and contrast these terms, as well as other vocabularies that may be associated with them.

Pre-coordination means that the coordination done to the IRS, is done by the indexer or cataloger during the indexing process (7). What he/she does is to “assign appropriate subject headings that often combine multiple component terms into a single longer expression” (7). There are very complex and elaborate rules for doing this. These rules, according to the article results in “a more complete and precise statement of the document’s aboutness” (7). On the other side, post-coordination is done “by the searcher during the search” process (7). When doing post-coordination, the indexer will use small phrases and/or single words. The phrases that are used have no grammatical structure (7). The user(s) then must use combinations of single words and small phrases to search. They most commonly use Boolean terms such as “and”, “or”,’ and “not” (7).

Just like other areas, the words that go into a controlled vocabulary are listed. The place where they are listed is called a “thesaurus” (8).This place also gives how each word relates to another. The other major thing that a controlled vocabulary thesaurus does is that when a user looks up a term, it lists the words or phrases that are not correct and gives the user an idea what other terms to look for (8). How the thesauri are expressed is in a structure called “syndetic” (8). What this means is that the structure is a plan on how to use the controlled vocabulary. What this does is that it helps both the user and the indexer find related terms they may not have thought of before. The problem, which mainly concerns users, is that most thesauri are not open to outside users, only to the indexer (8). In the subsection of thesauri, there are three main relationships that are talked about. The first of these is a hierarchical relationship. What this relationship is that a term within the thesaurus will indicate a more broad term to use or a more narrow term. The example given is of camping. A broader term would be to use “outdoor recreation” and then, under Outdoor recreation, a narrower term would be “camping or picnicking” (8)

The following section discusses three ways of searching databases. These three are just “general keyword searches”, followed by “phrase searching”, and finally, “descriptor searching” (13). Each method of searching will give a person more or less results depending on which search method is chosen and what the user is looking for. General keyword searches are the broadest and yield the most results. There are good and bad points with this. Yes, the user will get a lot of hits but the major downside is that there are a lot of hits and they may or may not all be relevant to what the user is looking for. Another upside is that a user may come across key words that he or she may not have thought of and they can add this word to their list of key words. An example of this is using the terms Forensic and Anthropology. You will get results related to both. When searching with Phrases, a user is bound to get fewer records than a general keyword search, as when using phrases, it searches “the title, abstract, or descriptors” (13). As Johnson says, “this search is somewhat more focused” (13). Finally there is searching using Descriptors. Compared to the first two searching methods, this method is the most concise and produces the fewest records. Because of this, it is also gives the most records to as what the user is looking for. As Johnson writes, “post coordinate vocabularies that, function best when multiple terms are coordinated by the searching using Boolean operators” (16).

The article now switches to preco vocabulary. The major one that is most often used is “Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)” (16). These subject headings are very similar to the terms used in a postco thesaurus in that they have a hierarchal structure. There are broad and narrow terms, related terms, and listening to use if term does not fit. However, there are three differences outlined in the article. The first is that there are terms that are “longer phrases that combine multiple concepts” (16). This means that many times, there are phrases that at times, many users cannot tell the difference between some of them. The second difference is that in LCSH there are “subdivisions” (16). These are used to show a different area of a subject. For example, a LCSH for dog sports would look like this: Dog Sports-Agility. The final major difference with LCSH vocabulary is that some terms may have a geographic distinction to them to separate them from other categories. Finally, in comparing thesauri and LCSH, the preco usually has fewer subject headings than postco has descriptors.

The final section of this article is first a brief description on how subject headings are constructed. This entails looking at the printed LCSH and then possibly (and most likely) following the terms already listed. The next section is an introduction to LCSH and the publications that librarians should subscribe to if they are planning on using LCSH in their cataloging. To finish this first part of the introduction to LCSH subject headings, there is a brief history given of how the guide and new (subject headings) came about.

In the next section, the article discusses the three components of the entries in the LoC. The first of these are the headings. The article explains how the headings are written, either single terms or phrases and that there are two ways of writing the phrases, either in normal English grammatical ways or inverted. The second component of Library of Congress subject headings are the class numbers. These are ways to list where the items will go and it also helps distinguish locations for different subdivisions within a subject heading. For example, under the subject heading of Trees, you may find a set of class numbers for arborists, or types, or biology. The final major component for subject headings is “Scope Notes” (22). These, as the article describes them, are a way “to ensure consistency of subject usage by specifying the range of subject matter” (22).

The next section is a more in-depth discussion about how the subject headings are divided. There are USE and Used For references. These are used when a more appropriate term should be used or searched for. Then “Broader Topics” and “Narrower Topics” are discussed, as well as “Related Topics” (23). They help a user find and/or narrow their search. Finally, “See Also” and Subdivisions are described. Subdivisions are probably the most confusing, at least in terms of geographical terms. The geographical divisions can be done by both human features such as cities, but also earthen features such as rivers and lakes. The final part of this article talks about pattern headings which, according to the article are not used at all that much due to the creation of “free-floating subdivisions” (26).