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Still a Lot to Lose: The Role of Controlled Vocabulary in Keyword Searching

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In their 2005 study, Gross and Taylor found that more than a third of records retrieved by keyword searches would be lost without subject headings. A review of the literature since then shows that numerous studies, in various disciplines, have found that a quarter to a third of records returned in a keyword search would be lost without controlled vocabulary. Other writers, though, have continued to suggest that controlled vocabulary be discontinued. Addressing criticisms of the Gross/Taylor study, this study replicates the search process in the same online catalog, but after the addition of automated enriched metadata such as tables of contents and summaries. The proportion of results that would be lost remains high.

KEYWORDS *controlled vocabularies, subject headings, Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), keywords, keyword searching*

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