

On Efficiency in Scholarship: Do Keywords matter?

Abstract:

After a theoretical introduction on knowledge formation, this talk provides an empirical investigation of the only form of keyword indexing to precede the digital age. I analyze the contribution of concordances to the evolution of knowledge in English literature. Although keyword indexing might seem to provide serious efficiencies in scholarship, there is little evidence that availability of keyword indexes had much effect on rates of scholarly production, whether these are measured by PhDs, MAs and BAs, or articles in the scholarly literature. Such positive evidence as exists is easily attributable to other causes. The implications for current digital scholarship are considered.