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TRB Committee on Library and Information Science for Transportation
Subcommittee on the TRT Meeting
2007 Summer Conference
Chicago, Renaissance Hotel
July 9, 2007

Present: Jason Bittner, Paul Burley, Bill Burns, Bob Cullen, Rita Evans (Recorder), Joyce Koeneman, Barbara Post, Sandy Tucker (LIST Chair), Amanda Wilson, Ken Winter

1. Meeting called to order by Sandy Tucker at 10:30.
2. TRT history –Barbara Post briefly reviewed the history of the Transportation Research Thesaurus (TRT). In 2005, funding from an NCHRP project allowed migration from DOS to web and maintenance to be done at TRB. TRT was made available on the TRB website in 2006 and it was integrated into TRIS.

Members of LIST discussed the TRT in January 2007 and determined that they wanted to review terms rather than having the contract lexicographer, Michael Kleiber, make solo decisions. How this will actually work still needs to be determined. Barbara Post is pushing for NCHRP to pay for a TRT meeting in late 2007. Sandy noted that ANSI 39.19 covers thesauri and TRT development, maintenance and oversight should be compliant. NCHRP 450 also outlines process for maintaining thesaurus

The thesaurus has Related Terms (Associative) which need to be manually selected and dealt with. Broader and narrower terms are contained within the overall structure. Scope notes help to define when term will be used, i.e., how is term to be used within this thesaurus. Definitions from AASHTO will serve slightly different function; Bob Cullen said it's his understanding that the TRT can incorporate definitions from the AASHTO Glossary that was issued recently. Sandy asked if AASHTO could tell us which definitions are somewhat problematic since we'd be more inclined to use terms that AASHTO felt comfortable with.

3. A main function of the subcommittee is to review the Candidate Terms. The current TRIS input system allows indexers to suggest Candidate Terms and to assign them as Candidate Terms. We can identify Uncontrolled Terms and usage. Ken Winter noted that with TRIS, we can now identify what terms actual users are using when they search; this is extremely important information for committee to have.

4. NTL has purchased and plans to install Data Harmony software on their servers for handling TRT maintenance. It has all required elements including security levels. The subcommittee will have access which can allow read-only, editing, and submitting candidate terms. Probably only one or two people will have edit capability since the primary function for committee will be to submit Candidate Terms. Once updates are made in Data Harmony, NTL will be able to publish the latest version of the TRT which will incorporate any changes.

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5. The process was discussed. On quarterly basis, NTL will send terms to committee members for review with comments due within two weeks. If there is disagreement, the committee can discuss the issues. The process will be to approve or get rid of candidate terms. Ken Winter proposed requiring a 2/3 affirmative vote in order to add a Candidate Term and make it an Index Term. If the vote is less than 2/3, the Candidate Term will go to “parking area” for one year and then it will be revisited. That review can occur up to three times. Could there be a script that would run a search using the term and if nothing turns up, question whether it should be submitted?

Ken will work on drafting something for a form that would provide some guidance for submitting Candidate Terms. A few bullet points would remind people that the TRT is hierarchical, uses multiple terms and is used for transportation.

Contract lexicographer Michael Kleiber has disagreed with committee approach and has submitted his resignation. Amanda Wilson wants to capture the important knowledge that Michael embodies and hopes to meet with him while he is still working on the TRT. The committee acknowledges the enormous amount of work that Michael has done and the very significant contribution he has made to the TRT. Members agreed that Michael will be invited to join the committee. They also agreed that the committee wants to acknowledge his contribution via a formal TRB certificate to be presented at either TRB Annual Meeting 2008 or SLA Annual Conference 2008. Barbara Post will follow up on this.

Joyce Koeneman noted the importance of reflecting long-term rather than current usage and the committee must keep this in mind. Members need to ask traffic engineers and practitioners about terminology and not just rely on a search of databases, Google, etc. for usage. Our audience is primarily research-oriented. Bob Cullen will find out how many AASHTO terms were approved and will send those to committee members. TRT is heavily focused on highways. Rita Evans said that with more Lead-in Terms to direct users to correct terms there would be less need to argue about specific terms.

6. Barbara Post said NCHRP funding is available for at least one full-day meeting in D.C. which will focus on identifying a contractor; let Barbara know if you know of someone who may be interested. The problem statement is written so that funding will be divided into two parts. The first part is working on definitions and getting them assigned. The second part is IT work entailing adding fields.

7. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Evans
LIST Committee Secretary

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