I like your title: it encapsulates many of my considerations while reading the Bates article. Over in the A-F discussion, Michelle mentioned that, at the Cal Library where she works, the idea of allowing users to add subject tags had been floated, and the end was that *maybe* certain professors could do this, but *not* undergraduates. I notice that Bates, (maybe with some chips on her shoulder left over from not getting enough respect as an Information Specialist in her other article…), though she is optimistic about the users' role in the proposed system, also sounds rather condescending toward these users. She writes that we need to "get the searcher in the habit of using…" She cites Belkin's position "that we are demanding too much when we expect a client to approach an information system with a reasonably well-articulated query". There seem to be many issues of class and many assumptions about users to be examined when designing a system. There is a tension between her view of the user as an energetic and involved participant, willing to stop at the access point and interact with suggestions and thesaurus, and the view of the unschooled and incompetent user which occasionally emerges. I believe this friction is produced when our mission to facilitate information access equitably and, as Bates beautifully puts it, "generously", rubs against the reality that a certain amount and type of user education imay be necessary for access to any complex system. If I may crash down from the philosophical to the specific: I'm a high school teacher. As my students are beginning a research paper, I'm spending all day observing unskilled users making queries. Just today, and I promise you I am not making this up, a student who is doing a paper on artificial insemination entered a search: "stick your hand up a cow's butt". Now, granted, there is definitely something Heisenbergian involved there, since odds were good I would see this, but the fact is, his more serious searches showed a similar lack of awareness of language register and academic usage. I'm confident that this boy will have better skills by winter, but we can't say that of everyone. Can an information retrieval system which makes no assumptions of common usage and task-appropriate vocabulary actually function? As on Google it will say "did you mean…" when we misspell, might a system do the same thing for slang, texting language, or obscenity? And if so, are we sure we want it to? Will a system like that support a social commitment to giving all our children the 'access tools' that come with true literacy? Should a user-friendly system design also mitigate the fact that my student has as yet no tools to discriminate among the hits he did get? What type of access ultimately supports his enfranchisement?