
KO Reports

Knowledge Organization in Italy

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As an Italian chapter of ISKO has recently been reorganized, I was kindly invited to write a short report on current KO activities in our country. So, in the following, I will briefly illustrate the local situation of the various kinds of knowledge organization systems, as well as related developments and activities. I am grateful to Paola Capitani, Emanuela Casson, Michele Santoro, and Lorena Zuccolo for providing useful information to be included here.

Subject headings

Many Italian libraries create subject headings for their catalogues, using as a reference guide the "Soggettario per i cataloghi delle biblioteche italiane." This is basically a list of subject terms created by the Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze (BNCF), first published in 1956 and later updated with various lists of new subject headings. Though the Soggettario is still the main available reference, librarians are generally aware that it is outdated in both vocabulary and structure, especially as it does not provide explicit principles and rules to create and combine subject headings.

A research group, called the Gruppo di ricerca sull'indicizzazione per soggetto (GRIS), was founded in 1990. It was devoted to improving the principles and consistency of subject indexing. Its members have performed in depth investigations of the structure of subject headings, starting with the principles of facet analysis used in PRECIS and including original developments. Results of their work are coded into the Guida all'indicizzazione per soggetto, published in 1996 and available also online <<http://www.aib.it/aib/commiss/gris/guida.htm>>. The GRIS guide does not concern vocabulary, but morphological and syntactical rules for choosing and combining terms according to a sound citation order, based on a "role scheme." Unfortunately, GRIS principles have

been applied only in a small number of libraries, mainly in Tuscany, where most GRIS members are located.

A new project is now attempting to blend the traditional authority of the Soggettario with the more advanced principles of GRIS. A working group has been formed with people from BNCF, GRIS, and others, to study the feasibility of a renewal of the Soggettario. The group produced a report book in 2002, specifying the desirable features of the new system, and is at present searching for grants to implement it.

Terminology and thesauri

BNCF is also involved in a working group collecting information on online terminological resources <<http://www.indire.it/websemantico>>. The group is headed by Paola Capitani, and has organized several roundtables on terminology in special domains, such as economy, fashion, law, and education.

Thesauri are generally poorly known and used in Italy, although there are significant exceptions: among faceted systems we can mention the "Thesaurus italiano di sociologia," published in 1999, and the "Thesaurus regionale toscano," as well as specialized on social sciences including a general outline, available both in print (1996) and online <<http://www.regione.toscana.it/ius/ns-thesaurus/>>.

Classification systems

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) is by far the most widespread classification scheme in Italian libraries. A working group, coordinated by Luigi Crocetti, regularly translates the new editions of DDC manuals, and gives refresher courses on it for librarians. BNCF makes DDC numbers for bibliographical records both of its own catalogue, and of the national bibliography (= Bibliografia nazionale italiana: BNI), which is available for other libraries in a CD-ROM edition. A very large number of public libraries use DDC for their shelfmarks, so that users are accustomed to it.

This situation is different from other European countries, e.g., Spain where UDC is widespread. In Italy, UDC is only used in a limited number of librar-

ies, especially in the scientific area. UDC numbers are included in many records of the national union catalogue of serials, ACNP <<http://acnp.cib.unibo.it/cgi-ser/start/en/cnr/fp.html>>. The Library of Congress Classification is rare as well, while other used schemes are either locally created, or devoted to special disciplines (MSC for mathematics, JEL for economics, etc.). Faceted classification is poorly known and almost never used, though Bliss Bibliographic Classification 2 (BC2) was considered among options for new arrangement of books in some university libraries, before DDC was chosen, and a new booklet on the subject has just been published (Gnoli C., *Classificazione a faccette*, AIB, Roma, 2004). The main obstacle for faceted classification to spread is clearly the lack of available manuals and schedules in Italian, as well as teachers able to train cataloguers.

Digital applications

BNCF subject headings and DDC numbers are also common in Italian online catalogues. Among the 196 OPACs which are searchable through the national metaOPAC (MAI), 80% can be searched by subject heading, and 33% by DDC class. However, subject access is largely underexploited in OPACs, as the semantic richness included in terms and class numbers cannot be used, in most cases, to perform searches and browse results. This has been shown by a survey carried out in 2003-2004 on about 150 OPACs, by applying a carefully developed checklist; details and results of this project, called "OPAC semantici", are available online <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/sem/>>. That the majority of OPAC software provides poor exploitation of subject access is paradoxical, as cataloguers often invest much effort to input subject information in databases. Some examples, however, show nice possibilities which could be easily produced by appropriate settings of search engines and web interfaces.

As for directories of Internet resources, Tuscany (sort of an oasis for subject indexing!) offers a Virtual reference desk for public libraries <http://www.cultura.regione.toscana.it/biblioteche/servizi_web/vrd/>, consisting of selected links to web sites with abstract and DDC number, reproducing the BUBL model; DDC can also be used to browse disciplines, which is especially appropriate for users seeing it on the shelves of their public library as well. Such a classified approach is not used, instead, in a more recent directory of Internet resources, SegnaWeb <<http://www.segnaweb.it>>, developed by the Italian

library association (AIB) and based on the MyLibrary software. AIB's large web site includes useful directories of knowledge organization systems available online: see section 16 in <<http://www.aib.it/aib/lis/lis.htm>>.

Unfortunately, the Italian library community is poorly connected with other fields relevant to knowledge organization, such as linguistics, automatic text processing, ontology, etc. Computer scientists at various research centres are more connected with the international network of their field than with national information institutions. Giovanni Maria Sacco at the Polytechnic of Turin works on a technique called dynamic taxonomy, which is basically analogous to faceted classification, and has been applied to article archives of the newspaper "La Stampa". Other people, like those involved in the EDAMOK project, are working on automated classification of digital documents and mapping of different taxonomies, in the context of knowledge management. An interesting bridge between disciplines is being built by Luca Rosati, by providing simple descriptions and examples of faceted classification in the contexts of knowledge management and information architecture; for the latter domain he has created an Italian mailing list, "Architecta." Finally, the continuing work on ontology meant as a philosophical field, also to be applied to knowledge organization, by former ISKO member Roberto Poli and his co-workers at University of Trento and Mitteleuropa Foundation must not be forgotten.

Events

Events concerning subject indexing are occasionally organized, especially by AIB sections and groups. Recently, some of them concerned the work about renewal of the Soggettario, and others will soon occur on the "OPAC semantici" project. A rich one-day seminar entitled "L'indicizzazione: problemi e prospettive," with contributions by several esteemed librarians, was held in Modena in December 2002 on the initiative of Michele Santoro: fulltext proceedings are available as papers of the online journal "Bibliotime" <<http://www.spbo.unibo.it/bibliotime/num-vi-1/>>. A smaller event was organized in Turin in 2001, and is reported in the ISKO Italia website <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/isko/doc/spazi.htm>>. GRIS holds a half-day session each year within the AIB national congress held in October in Rome.

The Italian ISKO chapter

ISKO has had a chair for Italy since 1991, in the person of Giliola Negrini. She organized seminars and workshops in the 1990s together with the National Research Council, and has been working on applying terminology, concept analysis, and Dahlberg's Systematifier model to knowledge bases in the humanities. At the end of 2003, the chair charge passed to me, as Giliola is more involved with new research for the industrial sector.

The Italian Chapter of ISKO has only a few members, so far. However, encouraging results are coming from the reorganization of the national section through the creation of an electronic mailing list open to non-ISKO members, and a website with information on the society, its history, and useful links <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/isko/>>. Lorena Zuccolo is providing substantial help for this. Spreading information through the Net seems to be a key factor. Indeed, in 2004 we already passed the threshold of 10 members (including well-known librarians and LIS professors) to become a full ISKO chapter.

There is room for hope that we will further extend this basis, as many people seem to be interested in the

domain of knowledge organization, while the main Italian institution devoted to subject indexing, GRIS, is being absorbed into a larger committee of the national library association. Developments in information and computer science also make it necessary to think of knowledge organization on a skyline broader than librarianship, as a cross-disciplinary field including contributions from information science, philosophy, linguistics, etc.

Therefore, the main aim of the Italian ISKO chapter, for now, is to provide a reference in the field of knowledge organization, by pointing to bibliographic and Internet sources, and linking interested people to KO activities and events in other countries, both by ISKO and other organizations. The website will offer a place for various reports, translations and other contributions in KO by members. Original research is also planned, on impulse of interests of single members, about classification theory, with special reference to the theory of integrative levels previously studied by the Classification Research Group and Dahlberg, and its possible applications in the digital environment. Anyone interested in more information about KO in Italy, and ISKO chapter activities, is welcome to contact the chair at <gnoli@aib.it>.

14th National Conference of the Association of Librarians in Education – Romania (Asociația Bibliotecarilor din Invatamant – Romania – ABIR)

Victoria Frâncu
Central University Library, Bucharest

The 14th National Conference of the Association of Librarians in Education - Romania (Asociația Bibliotecarilor din Invatamant - Romania - ABIR) was held at the Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" in Cluj. On this occasion the Cataloguing and Indexing Section of ABIR had a very active workshop under the general theme of the conference, the changes in the librarian's profession.

On the first day of the conference a new indexing tool was released: "Tezaurul interdisciplinar multi-

lingv pentru uzul bibliotecilor - româna, engleza, franceza" (Multilingual interdisciplinary thesaurus for library use - Romanian, English, French) by Victoria Frâncu.

The range of subjects discussed was not limited to the theme but also included other topics including: the Romanian translation of IFLA's document Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records for which the permission was obtained in the meantime; the Romanian translation of Ia McIlwaine's "The Universal Decimal Classification: a Guide to its Use" as a result of the favourable answer to the survey organised by our section of the library association; the inclusion of Romanian as a language of the future multilingual UDC Master Reference File; and future activities.

The speakers, all specialists in cataloguing and indexing from the main university libraries of Romania, presented papers including subjects such as the following: the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, the use of RAMEAU authorities in a Romanian library environment, cataloguing of electronic resources, a well-documented user study on different user and document categories, the many

facets of subject analysis as prior activity in subject representation, the necessity of exchange formats in information transfer.

Following is an overview of the subjects developed in those papers.

Bibliographic identities: a [small] contribution to the collocating function of catalogues

Dan Matei

Communication implies the reification of the bibliographic identities in a catalogue as a method of improving its precision, without significantly affecting its recall. In particular, the presenter discussed the way this reification is achieved in practice within the project Panizzi, i.e. the union catalogue of the national cultural heritage. Cases of personal identity and institutional identity were analysed. In the end, the problems which are still pending were presented.

FRBR: a practical approach

Victoria Frâncu

The Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records give the right solutions to many problems encountered by the library world nowadays. The entity-relation model provided by FRBR offers multiple possibilities to turn to better account the information otherwise hidden behind the traditional bibliographic records. The author made a short, yet necessary, description of the model and drew a parallel between a traditional catalogue record and the possible way the same library material can be treated according to the FRBR model. The focus was laid on the model's main function of collocating entities with shared attributes but also on that of making the necessary distinctions between different document types along with the relations between all those.

Indexing with RAMEAU: advantages and difficulties

Monica Lazăr, Nina Botez, Dana Crisan, Eva Maister

The paper reevaluated the remarks of the indexers' team at the Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" of Cluj regarding their practice in using RAMEAU subject authorities. The decision to accommodate RAMEAU authorities in subject indexing was necessitated and facilitated by the acquisition of Aleph 500, a library system able to cope with UNIMARC formats. Additionally, RAMEAU's wide coverage was appreciated as convenient to a univer-

sity library with collections from all fields of knowledge. Moreover, the linguistic side of the work was thought not to be troublesome given the common language family of French and Romanian. However, from theoretical considerations to practical application the way is not always smooth and many difficulties appeared in the daily indexing work of which the lexical, syntactical and semantical ones were dealt with in the paper.

From catalogue cards to the online catalogue, databases on CD-ROM and the Internet: a comparative study in information retrieval

Olimpia Curta

The study is based on a survey investigating the opinions and experience of different categories of information searchers over four years, made by the author at the same university library. The questionnaire was meant to give feedback on four methods used in information retrieval and, specifically, it provided data on the following issues: category of users, identification of the domain of interest, evaluation of the frequency of use of the different IR tools, evaluation of the relevance of the information retrieved, evaluation of the need for assistance in IR, identification of the users of the computer, evaluation of the need for instruction in using the modern equipment, collecting the opinions on the information services offered, and making suggestions for improved services. The conclusions were drawn on each category of users (students, faculty, researchers and others) with the most important being the growing preference for the online retrieval of information (online catalogue and Internet) and the use of CD-ROM databases, particularly in the case of students.

Interdisciplinary techniques in information processing

Dana Dinu

Re-integrating librarianship into information and communication sciences, this paper is not aiming to solve the controversial topic of discipline identity, but to prove the common nature of methodology - taking as different just the perspective approach. The basic technologies of the catalogue were analysed, the catalogue being regarded as the essential tool of any library activity whose main purpose is the availability of information to users or, in other words, the fulfillment of the information need. Document bibliographic description, classification and indexing -

as developing in most of Romanian libraries – were systematized by logical and technological criteria. The results point to some discipline interferences dealing with concept and its linguistic materialisation (logic, epistemology, semiotics, semantics, terminology) requiring managerial research and professional development re-evaluation.

Is cataloguing of CD-ROM's problematic?

Sia Fodorean

Until recently, The Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" of Cluj was not confronted with cataloguing of electronic documents. The acquisition of this type of document through legal depot imposed the re-consideration of the cataloguing rules to be followed and required the answering of many other critical issues such as: which rules should prevail in cataloguing: MARC or ISBD(ER); should the electronic documents be kept in a separate database; should they be catalogued even if the technical re-

quirements are lacking, making the document unreadable; should a template be made on the server for consistency purposes; should the electronic documents be lent out; should the optical sound recordings be differentiated from CD-ROM's? All these questions were argued and answered in the paper.

The advantages of the UNIMARC format in making a national database

Ilona Gurka-Balla

The author presented the advantages of the UNIMARC format and those of using the same format in cataloguing at the national level. She remarked in a critical manner the variety of library systems used in Romanian university libraries and public libraries. Likewise, she strongly argued in favour of concentrated efforts directed towards unified cataloguing rules and a national catalogue.

Agenda for the
**9th ISKO
General Assembly**
8th ISKO International Conference
London, England
Thursday 15 July 2004, 4.45pm

1. Opening
2. Election of 9th General Assembly Chair and Secretary
3. Additions to and approval of Agenda
4. Minutes of 8th General Assembly, July, 2002, Granada, Spain
5. President's Report
6. Treasurer's report and fees
7. Election of 3 members to Executive committee
8. Discussion of President's and Treasurer's reports
9. Topics for 9th International ISKO Conference, Vienna, Austria (G. Budin)
10. AOB