Editorial

Thesaurus Software, Knowledge Organization, and the Human Interface

We are happy to include in this special issue first of all almost all of the papers of the Thesaurus Software Seminar held on Aug.14, 1990 at Darmstadt, immediately preceding the First International ISKO Conference. Sponsored by the Committee on Classification and Thesaurus Research of the German Documentation Society (DGD/KTF) and organized by the ISKO Secretariat, Frankfurt, this seminar was keynoted by DGD/KTF Chairman Winfried SCHMITZ-ESSER (who does not always look as serious as in the picture on the following page) with an address on the topic *Thesauri Facing New Challenges*. He chaired the seminar as well as its concluding panel on *Experts answer your questions* which he started out with a survey of European vendors of thesaurus software, listed on a handout given to the seminar participants and reprinted in a slightly updated version in this issue, too. Since one of the previously announced speakers at the seminar, who had intended to provide a comparison of European thesaurus software packages, had withdrawn, this survey was considered very helpful for each of the numerous participants in the seminar. Some of the thesaurus-software suppliers had also been able to come to the seminar and exhibit their thesaurus programs in the halls of Darmstadt Technical University, where the conference took place.

The second paper by Robert FUGMANN, Idstein, Germany, went right into the practice of thesaurus-making *(An interactive classaurus on the PC; practical experiences)* using the LIDOS software, whose functioning was demonstrated by Mr. Fugmann on his own PC later on. In the third paper, Jochen GANZMANN, Frankfurt, presented a brilliant overview of *Criteria for the evaluation of thesaurus programs*. In this connection, Loll ROLLING, Luxembourg, mentioned the work done in 1986 by the Bureau Marcel van Dijk (through Mr. Georges van Slype) concerning an analysis of the characteristics of thesaurus programs. A copy of the paper concerned is still available from his office at the European Communities. With the fourth paper - which concluded the morning session - Claus RITZLER, Hamburg, presented a *Comparative study of (German) thesaurus software* in which two German and one English thesaurus program were described and their respective merits pointed out.

The paper replacing the retracted one mentioned above was presented by Roy RADA, formerly with the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) and now at the University of Liverpool, Computer Science Department. In *Maintaining Thesauri and Metathesauri* he offered his insights gained and experiences gathered in the establishment of the UMLS, the NLM's Unified Medical Language System, thus enriching the seminar with the aspects of thesaurus software needed for a network of thesauri and classification systems and providing a tool that might serve not only one center or one country but probably the entire biomedical discipline of the world - if it will be completed successfully. The final paper by D.H. FISCHER, GMD Darmstadt, *(Modelling thesauri on the basis of frame systems)* could not be included in IC 90-3/4, but will appear in one of the next issues. - We have, however, also one book review of relevance in this issue namely the one by Robert FUGMANN on the DOMESTIC Thesaurus Software as described by Brigitte MEISS as well as the note about the Term Net Thesaurus Software in preparation to include 9 languages.

The second item in the headline of this Editorial, *Knowledge Organization,* refers to the two comprehensive reports in this issue on the First International ISKO Conference in Darmstadt, August 14-17, 1990, which cover (1) the Conference as such and its 12 plenary sessions, and (2) the short reports on each of the 12 workshops, submitted by the respective chairpersons or their representatives. Besides this, everybody is invited to orient himself on the contents of these sessions and workshops through the two Proceedings volumes, one of which was already available at the start of the conference, while the second one will be out in November 1990, and can be ordered from INDEKS Verlag. With these proceedings a new series is started: *Advances in Knowledge Organization!*

A most interesting statement at this conference was made by Roland HJERPPE, Head of LIBLAB, the Linköping, Sweden, University's Department of Computer and Information Science, in his excellent paper presenting *A Framework for Characterizing Systems for Knowledge Organization.* He pointed out that the term 'System for Knowledge Organization' (SKO) was strictly speaking a .misnomer, as knowledge itself cannot be organized, only (re)presentations of it. But since language and perception might be regarded as some of the most basic SKOs, whatever is built on them might likewise be regarded as an SKO. One should be aware that knowledge takes many forms, and that the focus in research on classification and indexing has largely been on knowledge made explicit in verbalized form. The special SKOs considered in his paper are classification systems and thesauri. However, the pertaining deliberations could also be applied to systematic nomenclatures and taxonomies, to encyclopedias as well as to the conceptual schemata of data bases. Even the knowledge representations used in the knowledge bases of, say, expert systems, might be regarded as SKOs despite the fact that their emphasis - so far - has been more on representation than on organization.
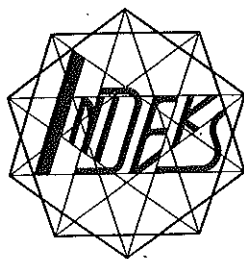
It is somehow strange with our terms: When founding ISKO and looking for a name for our new Society, we had the German term *Wissensordnung* in mind which would be translated into English as *Knowledge Ordering*. But we learned that one could not use the term *ordering of knowledge* because of the connotation *to purchase knowledge*. Thus, fully aware of the fact that knowledge cannot be organized, but only knowledge units, viz. concepts, we agreed to use *Knowledge Organization* in order to be understood in the English speaking world. Now, this term *Knowledge Organization* is also used by the Artificial Intelligence community, maybe in a somewhat different sense according to the understanding of their members. Nevertheless, we probably mean the same thing and must try to cooperate in order that both directions will profit from their methodological knowledge, viz. concept analysis, concept relationships, and concept representation in adequate concept systems on our part and computerization of knowledge bases and its technology on the part of our AI colleagues.

The *Human Interface,* our third topic here, although a technical concept and term, acquired a new connotation at the conference - as one participant wrote: "I am looking forward to our human interface!". Is it not so: just as a microfiche or a computer screen will never replace the good feeling of holding an interesting book in one's hand and the joy to read its amusing, enlightening, exciting, stimulating, or enriching contents, in the same way a computer conference will never replace the joy of the very personal eye-to-eye encounter of colleagues often knowing each other so far only through the literature and now suddenly seeing the cherished object of their imagination in a human face and person before

them. This first ISKO Conference had many of such surprises to offer its participants. But, God willing, there are more of such chances to come. See only the announcements and Calls for Papers in this issue! Already in IC 90-2 we had the Call for Papers for the FID/CR Conference in Toronto, June 1991, on the back inside cover page. But there will also be an ASIS/SIG/CR Workshop in Toronto on Nov.4, 1990 and another conference in Rome, Italy, on Dec.2-4, 1990 on *Documentary languages*. Dean Halsey from the School of Information Science and Policy of SUNY at Albany, NY, plans to organize another Albany conference on classification in November 1991. With this issue, however, we prepare already somehow for the next ISKO Conference in India, 1992, where the Ranganathan birth centenary is to be observed and celebrated. The big UBS Publishers's Distributors company in New Delhi started recently to reprint Ranganathan's books. A review on these reprints in classification, already available, has been made by M.P.SATIJA and is likewise included in this issue. Thus, with Ranganathan's books again available for everybody, we will all get a chance to return to the beginning of modern classification theory and see and evaluate for ourselves how it can teach us to deal with our present problems in possibly more adequate systems for the organization of knowledge than we have had so far.

Thus, the Darmstadt events and their follow-ups will keep us busy - which is good and necessary. Let us hope and pray that no international conflict will disturb or interrupt what has been started with so much enthusiasm, good will, and promise for a better future of work and understanding in our field of concern!

Ingetraut Dahlberg

Tools for
Knowledge Organization
and the
Human Interface

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Vol.1, 280 p., ISBN 3-88672-020-9, DM 56.- (for ISKO members 25% less)

Vol.1 contains the first part of the almost 60 papers presented at the said conference with the abstracts of papers published in proceedings vol.2.
Among the plenary session papers of this volume are those by B.C.VICKERY; R.HJERPPE, K.Markey DRABENSTOTT and H.ALBRECHTSEN. Workshop topics cover: General issues, Algorithmic text analysis, Terminology, Knowledge organization by universal and special systems, Thesaurus issues, Online retrieval, Hypermedia, Retrieval technologies, and Indexing.
Vol.2 will include the rest of the workshop papers and the plenary papers by Ch.R.HILDRETH, M.FUJIKAWA, A.GILCHRIST, and O.SECHSER as well as the conference summary by E.de GROLIER and the index to both volumes.

With this volume the INDEKS Verlag starts a new series: "Advances in Knowledge Organization" (ISSN 0938-5495). If you are interested in subscribing to this series you are invited to indicate this