

Editorial

Knowledge Organization and Change

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (540-480 BC) is remembered for one famous statement: *panta rhei – all is in flux*, moving like water in a river. Nothing is constant, we are confronted at all times with the fact that time is passing and at a constantly accelerating rate at that, but seemingly never before with such a speed and with so many *changes* occurring progressively. We ask ourselves: where is this development leading us? What is the purpose, what is the end of this development?

It was our ISKO member Professor Roland HJERPE, who in 1994 at the ISKO Scientific Advisory Council Meeting in Copenhagen suggested that our 4th International ISKO Conference should be devoted to the topic “Knowledge Organization and Change“, and this suggestion was accepted immediately. Indeed we realize the turbulent changes going on around us, but it seems also opportune to sharpen our critical awareness and to relate the changes we observe to the knowledge we have acquired and to become still more conscious of what is happening at present in our professional and social world.

But what does *change* actually mean? My dictionary tells me that there are about 25 different meanings for the single word ‘change’ in German when used in different contexts and in Roget’s Thesaurus we find its different facets expressed in the meanings of e.g., ‘changing directions’, ‘substituting’, ‘varying’, ‘relinquishing’, ‘differing’, ‘modifying’, ‘transferring’, ‘transforming’, ‘improving’, ‘changing one’s mind’, etc. What kind of ‘change’ is meant in our context of Knowledge Organization? To which of its conceptions are we referring? ‘To alter one’s position’?, ‘to recognize and adapt to new developments’? It is also said: “The world will not change if we do not change“, placing the responsibility for a better world onto each single person...

Let’s have a look at the program of our forthcoming international conference (July 15-18, ‘96) which has been inserted into this issue of KO so that it may be taken out for use in case of need. Our US colleagues Dr. Sarah THOMAS, Dr. Jolande GOLDBERG and especially the program chair, Prof. Dr. Rebecca GREEN have very aptly and devotedly arranged the proposed and refereed papers into the following 14 Sessions:

- Library of Congress Classification
- Management of Change in KO Schemes
- KO in Cross-Cultural and Cross Linguistic Settings
- Relationships in KO
- KO in the Online Environment
- Impact of Technology on Bibliographic Elements

- KO in the Economic Environment
- User Focus in KO
- Thesauri and Metathesauri
- KO and Images
- Interplay of Epistemology and KO
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to KO
- Natural Language Processing
- Dewey Decimal Classification

As can be seen, the first and the last topics are forming a framework reflecting the two hosting holders of systems: The Library of Congress Classification and the Dewey Decimal Classification, the former because of the location of the conference and the latter in observance of its 120th birthday in 1996.

For all of these topics it is true that very visible changes have taken place in the most recent years and they are still in fast progress. Would Hamlet have asked here: „To change or not to change – this is the question“? We can only hope that our scientific community will grow in understanding these changes and why they are occurring and at the same time acquire the necessary distant look at them so as not to be overwhelmed by their torrential flood.

Yet we need to be open for a new look at things around us and at ourselves and to use the insights gained by this new look also for the organization of our own knowledge, both private and professional. By doing this and realizing the *changes* in our personal knowledge world we will be optimally enabled to *exchange* among one another and to improve our mutual understanding and by this contribute to the growth of our professional, our own *social knowledge*. To accomplish this, our forthcoming 4th International Conference at the Library of Congress could constitute an excellent platform in time and space for all participants from which a start into a new recognition of the foundations, epistemology and applicability of our field might be made.

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This issue of our journal opens new vistas, too. It starts with an article by Werner BIES (*Thinking with the help of images: on the metaphors of knowledge organization*), a fascinating paper presented at the German ISKO Chapter Conference, Trier, October 1995. It is indeed astonishing in how many possible pictures we are thinking and displaying our knowledge! May this attentive collection inspire our readers and help us organize our personal and social knowledge!

In the second article written by Anthony J.N. JUDGE (*Strategic Correspondences: Computer-aided Insight Scaffolding*), we find an application of sorts of the preceding one: an ingenious proposal to use centro-symmetric

diagrams to hold and re-configure concepts and concept sets and thus to visualize (and program) our knowledge not in linear or rectangular diagrammatic form, but in circles. We are reminded here of the design which *Raimundus Lullus* (1232-1315) used in demonstrating his *Ars Magna*, but we could also think of our own inner atomic worlds or the outer cosmic world all describing their circles in endless activity. The circle is the symbol of perfection -isn't it?

A third article by Ephraim NISSAN, Hillel WEISS, and Avraham YOSSEF (*HYPERJOSEPH: the hypertextual organization. Epistemological considerations*) guides us to the Bible, the Word of GOD – although here not used for preaching purposes but to remind us of its existence and to give a demonstration of a useful application of hypertext program facilities. Although the selected story of Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel, who was almost killed by his brothers, is not the most characteristic one to remember, it seems significant to me for our time: does it not show also a longing for regaining sexual purity as demonstrated by the behavior of Joseph against the lustful approaches by Pharaoh's wife Potiphar? A hope for a *change* in people's rotten attitudes?

The fourth article of this issue was given us by Fred W. RIGGS (*Onomastics and Terminology: Their Contributions to Knowledge Organization*). After having already written on his ideas in earlier volumes of this journal, he

now pleads for a new understanding of the science of representing concepts, to be called not *Terminology* but *Onomastics*. Prof. Riggs is a political scientist; his efforts to explain phenomena encountered during his field work in Thailand led him to recognize the inadequacy of concepts born out of Western experience to represent clearly the realities of very different societies and cultures. The neologisms he proposed to represent new concepts were often stoutly resisted, but this may have been the reason why he acquired a growing interest in problems of concept formation and terminology. Working through the *Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis* (COCTA) of the *International Social Science Council* – some of our readers will still remember the section COCTA NEWS in our journal – he came to focus more and more of his energies on the theoretical problems involved in the development of new concepts and the practical difficulties experienced when trying to secure acceptance for adequate ways to represent them.

May the selection of these articles challenge our readers to send their comments – in case any little bell's sound will alert them to do so.

Our next issue will be devoted to Gottfried W. LEIBNIZ to memorize, at the occasion of his 350th birthday on July 1, 1996, his contributions to our field of interest – for a change!

Ingetraut Dahlberg