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Book Review Editor

SCHMITZ-ESSER, Winfried. **Expo-Info 2000 : visuelles Besucherinformationssystem für Weltausstellungen [Expo-Info 2000 : a visual information system for visitors of World Exhibitions]**. Berlin, Germany : Springer, 2000. xii, 119 p. ISBN 3-540-67307-5.

This book describes a blueprint for an information system for the World Exhibition (Expo) 2000 in Hannover (Germany). Although the system was never implemented, the ideas developed here were, and remain very interesting. The purpose was to develop a system with a very high degree of user-friendliness, and with functionalities that would enable the many visitors expected at Expo 2000 to find their way to those parts of the exhibition of interest to them. The proposed system is based on the idea of a "Thought Space Travel" supported by a multilingual thesaurus.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part describes the device to be used for the searching while the second part describes the supporting thesaurus.

SIVIT (Siemens' Virtual Touch screen) was selected as a searching device. It consists of an elliptical table with a camera and projector above it. The camera detects the movements of the hand of the user and reacts to these movements. The results are subsequently projected on the table.

Access to the system is possible by keywords (free text) and by way of a network of concepts. The keywords access works with a KWIC-index. Selection of one of the lines of the index gives a multimedia result: a photo or short video plus some text. Using the first results, further information can be found by touching little ellipses with terms like "geographical", "Statistics", and "Desired effect". Documentary sources and a map illustrating the route to a pavilion where exhibits connected with the subject will be found can also be requested.

The "Thought Space Travel" is supported by a large multilingual thesaurus. For each subject for which information is available at the Expo, a so-called proxy-

text is made, a descriptive profile consisting of one or more combinations ("tupels") of four descriptors selected in the thesaurus. The first three descriptors are answers to the What, Where, and When questions. The fourth descriptor – called aspect – is less traditional; it denotes the purpose for which the topic could be interesting or useful. Twelve aspects are suggested; for example, the aspect "Recommendation" is used to describe recipes, instruction, and how-to-do; "Impact desired" describes goals envisaged, or target projected; and "Organizational" qualifies social and judicial conditions. The subject *Doctors without Frontiers* is assigned the following three tupels:

What-Descriptor	Where-Place	When-Time	Aspect
Free medical care	Earth	> 1971	organizational
Private help initiative	Earth	> 1971	definition
Humanitarian aid	Earth	> 1971	organizational

The *Super-Telescope "Parascope"* gets four tupels:

What-Descriptor	Where-Place	When-Time	Aspect
Very large telescope	Atacama Desert	> 1987	technical
Discovering space	Atacama Desert	> 1998	impact desired
Observation of space from the Earth	Atacama Desert	> 1998	result
Atmospherical diffraction	Earth	< > 0	assessment of consequences

The What-descriptors are general descriptors. Proper names are not used as descriptors but they can be found through the free text keyword system.

An important aspect of the system is that there are syntactic relations between all the descriptors. The "discovering space", in the indexing of the *Parascope*

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telescope, will always be connected with "impact desired", the year "> 1998", the country "Chile" and the continent "South-America". In the searching system, the what-descriptors and the place-descriptors are connected to broader and narrower descriptors.

The thesaurus itself is multilingual, including terms in English, French, Spanish and German. There are six relations between the terms in the thesaurus: in addition to the equivalence relation they are: generic/abstract, partitive, geographical, beneficial and detrimental. A few simple examples: *Overfertilization* is detrimental to *Biotopes*; *Automatic translation* is a part of *Computer linguistics*.

It is of interest to note that Schmitz-Esser has already published several papers in relation to this thesaurus model. At the 2000 ISKO Conference, in Toronto, Canada, he presented a thesaurus for describing dynamism in the world with partly different relations[1]. The Expo thesaurus does not include the *instrumental* relation that is present in the author's other projects. In the Expo thesaurus, the *instrumental relation* appears to be included as a partitive relationship, as in *Salk vaccination* which is a part of the *Fight against poliomyelitis*. This example from the book shows a weakness in the use of these relations. Why would this be a "is part of" relation rather than a "beneficial for" relation?

The book is interesting and, in my opinion, also important. It gives a sketch of a complete information system built for a clearly defined user group. The thesaurus and the automated search system are developed as an integrated whole. The extra search possibilities that computers can offer for information systems with controlled vocabularies are used in an intelligent way. It is regrettable that this project could not be put in application; it would have been interesting to be able to evaluate the experiences of the users.

Notes

1. Schmitz-Esser, W. (2000). How to cope with dynamism in ontologies. *Dynamism and Stability in Knowledge Organization : Proceedings of the Sixth International ISKO Conference 10 – 13 July 2000. Toronto, Canada.*, 83-89.Würzburg, Germany : Ergon Verlag.

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1.Overview

The second volume, under review, has taken four years to materialise after its announcement when the first volume appeared in 1997. Little wonder that the actual presentation has taken some liberty with what had been projected. Time takes its toll and, more pertinently, the situation depicted of terminology management (TM) applications, as the compilers emphasize, is one of permanent change, so that this second volume, by presenting as it were, "*a kind of snapshot of the topic(s) in question, reflecting the conditions at a particular moment in time*" (p.371), takes the risk of quicker obsolescence than the first volume which covered more durable issues. The risk is well taken, since despite the suspenseful state of some fields, like exchange formats, and the resultant expectancy, the general impression is one of coherent validity, mainly on account of the compilers' talents for evening odds up. However, the website offered for updating the information provided (http://appling.kent.edu) leaves the curious in the lurch. Not even the present volume is presented, but the site is said to be "revamped" along with expected updates. The persevering reader, when reverting to the print document, will be rewarded for his persistence by an informative collection of articles made available by the compilers.

The present volume keeps to the layout announced of three additional chapters on
(6) Information Management,
(7) Commercial & Industrial Applications, and
(8) Computer Applications for Terminology.

Even though these topics are liable to suffer under the endemic blast of change of the computer world ruffling the terminological scene, the main features of that scene are steadfast enough to warrant an inventory at any time. The three chapters will be evaluated in more detail later.

The natural evolution of the discipline has justified the reshuffling of appendices and the excellent infoboxes, as well as other minor manipulations of the projected volume. It is frustrating, however, to find that the additional selected bibliography promised for Volume 2 appears to have vanished.