

Editorial

Visions in Knowledge Organization

This issue begins with a paper called "The GALEN Dream". Indeed, it has something to do with Claudius Galenos, the famous Roman physician of Greek descent, who lived in the second century AD, was known as the "prince of all medical doctors" and also introduced many new concepts into medicine. What the GALEN Dream of a group of researchers in medical informatics includes - as described by Roy RADA and his colleagues in the team - may, however, become a model beyond its applicability in medicine.

So far, however, medical documentation and information centers and all others interested are invited to absorb and discuss the ideas and plans outlined. We would have liked to include more papers on this topic than just the "dream" and the two further position papers (*Medical Knowledge and Hypermedia*, by R. RADA et al., and *Natural Language Processing and GALEN* by R. BAUD et al.), however, at present the potential contributors whom we addressed early this year must have been busy with something else.

Thus these three short papers "envisioning" new pathways and organizational structures of a specific knowledge domain may induce colleagues in other areas of knowledge to develop their own visions of knowledge organization in their respective fields. We are always challenged to reconsider our situation and to look for possibilities of improvement. Steps have already been taken by representatives in the field of agriculture to attempt something similar to the Unified Medical Language System elaborated at the National Medical Library in Bethesda, MD, for the large subject area of medicine. A feasibility study was undertaken but so far the costs proved to be a major obstacle for further developments. Nevertheless a recent project of the European Communities strives toward reconciling the CAB Thesaurus (of some 50,000 terms) with AGROVOC (of some 12,000 terms). More than ever before we are faced today with the necessity to collaborate and help each other by building networks and sharing not only our know-how but also our know-what in order to build a better world with a fraction of the costs still today preventing better services for the users. It struck me indeed to see the amount of money projected in the "Dream Paper" for the realization of the GALEN program. It seems to me also that, instead of demanding millions of taxpayers' money for developments which might be done with much less, our collea-

gues would do better to "invest" in far more and better collaborative efforts.

One problem which surely will also have to be solved in the GALEN Programme, but which has not yet been solved in a general way, is to be seen in the question "What is a 'subject' in our field of knowledge organization?" In a remarkable contribution in J.Doc. 1992-2, Birger HJÖRLAND had already discussed this topic recently (*The concept of 'subject' in information science*). In a rather different way, but nevertheless very much to the point the topic of Knowledge Representation (KR) by subjects is tackled in our present issue by J.C. BINWAL with respect to Ranganathan's ideas of a 'universe of subjects' which he had named previously the "universe of knowledge". This timely contribution to the ending "Ranganathan Year" is herewith recommended as worthwhile reading.

The three further articles of the present issue are rather practice-oriented: my paper at the Joint FID/CR-ISKO Meeting in Madrid gives a description and discussion of the German Standard of 1987 on "Establishment and Development of Classification Systems"; Vesa KAUTTO presents most interesting comparative data on time studies of classing and indexing activities in Finland; and Michael AFOLABI recommends on how the new Christian churches in Africa could best be classified in the existing schemes of the DDC, the LCC and the UDC. At the same time we learn by his vivid description of the "Spiritual Matters" going on recently in African countries in the years after they had gained independence. These new Christian Churches can be regarded as a further extension of Christianity on this continent, based on the conviction that a Christian society can be built on the foundations of African culture.

Last, not least, we are very happy to include in this issue excellent reports on conferences, such as the one by M.A. GOPINATH on our 2nd International ISKO Conference at Madras, Aug. 26-28, 1992 (see ISKO News 11), and the two by Nancy WILLIAMSON on the Joint FID/CR-ISKO Meeting in Madrid, Oct. 20, 1992, as well as the SIG/CR Sessions during the 55th ASIS Conference in Pittsburgh, PA, Oct. 26-29, 1992 in FID/CR News 33.

We would be grateful to read your comments on these articles and their matters!

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