FID/CR News 23

FID/CR: Its Future Directions

Over the past several years, FID has been engaged in a thorough analysis of its programmes and activities with a view to long-range planning designed to respond to the technological, social, cultural and economic changes, which are occurring, and which will continue to occur as time moves toward the 21st century. It was with this purpose in mind that the membership of FID, at its General Assembly in Montreal in 1986, endorsed a "Strategic Plan" to revitalize the organization and to adopt a new approach to achieving its goals and objectives. Underlying this decision was the need for financial prudence as well as for a response to change, which would make the best use of FID's resources, while attracting support from other funding agencies. General acceptance of this Strategic Plan carries with it an obligation on the part of the various Committees of FID, including FID/CR, to respond to the Plan and its proposed programmes. It is essential that the Committees reassess their goals, activities and projects in the light of these programmes to determine ways in which they might best shape their activities and projects to take advantage of the Plan, while meeting the goals of FID and the needs of the world in general and their national constituencies in particular.

Periodic assessment of goals, objectives, and projects is essential in any organization it if is to remain a vital and effective force in its area of endeavour. Times change, needs alter, and financial requirements evolve. Critical evaluation on a periodic basis provides a mechanism for responding to such changes and is in itself a mark of vitality. FID/CR is no exception to this rule. Moreover, future funding of FID/CR activities and projects will be highly dependent on the Committee's ability not only to respond to the needs of its constituents, but also to attract the sponsorship of other funding agencies, while meeting the criteria established for the Strategic Plan.

It is against this background that questions related to the future directions for FID/CR activities and projects are addressed here. There are no quick or easy answers to the questions and no final answers are posed here. Rather, the purpose of this discussion is to inform the FID/CR membership of FID's plans for action as they will affect FID/CR, to explore the possibilities for planning and to solicit suggestions and comments from FID/CR members. This discussion also forms the basis for a response to the proposed programme plan for 1989-1992 which has been requested by the FID Council.

What is the Strategic Plan and what programmes are being proposed for 1989-1992? The plan is a general plan for action by FID and its Committees intended to provide the framework for activities over the next four years. A key component of the Strategic Plan is a proposed programme plan which is to be presented for approval at the 44th FID Conference and Congress, in Helsinki, Aug.28 - Sept.1, 1988. This programme plan, which will have a significant impact on FID/CR activities, consists of five major programme areas as follows:

1. Improvements in the availability and applicability of information resources;
2. Developing the information market-place;
3. Development of tools for information work;
4. Increasing basic understanding of the properties of information; and 5
5. Professional development, especially the education and training of documentalists.

Within the above context, Committees must take into consideration not only the appropriateness of projects for the proposed programme, but also each Committee is expected to have a plan of its own. In each case, this will necessitate establishing the requirements for research and development, defining an R and D programme, planning and defining the scope of activities and products within the programme, and developing proposals for carrying out the research and evaluating results.

To meet the requirements of this plan a new and more active kind of approach on the part of the Committees will be necessary. How might FID/CR be expected to fit into the "new" FID? The first step must be a critical re-examination of FID/CR's goals, objectves and projects determining what they are, how they are carried out and the importance of their contribution to the theory and practice of classification and indexing. In the second step, the research needs of FID/CR's areas of interest should be identified and described and some priorities set. Only then will it be possible to develop a plan of action for the Committee which would meet the criteria set by FID and serve the international classification and indexing community.

Of the five major programmes proposed, programmes 3 and 5 appear to be most directly related to FID/CR's needs and interests. While programme 1, 2 and 4 may not be entirely irrelevant to classification research, they appear much less likely to be central to FID/CR's main focus. Programme 1 focusses on maximum use of resources and resource sharing; programme 2 is people, or client-oriented but could provide a forum for projects which relate classification and its use to database design and data display. Programme 4 deals with the properties of information which provides some scope for the theoretical considerations of classification. However, programmes 3 and 5 appear to focus directly on issues which are central to FID/CR's interest. They appear to be broad enough in scope to support the theoretical foundations of classification and to encompass most of the kinds of activities or projects which the Committee might elect to undertake. Together these two programmes allow for projects involving the creation of classification and indexing tools, the evaluation of retrieval systems, the education and training of classifiers and indexers and the promotion of the profession.

While the time and space available for this present discussion do not permit an in-depth analysis of all of the needs and requirements, it is possible, at a general level, to begin to identify some of the most important concerns which must be taken into account in establishing the FID/CR's future directions. As presently outlined in its brochure, FID/CR has ten purposes (or objectives). To summarize them briefly, these objectives relate to the planning and sponsoring of study con-

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ferences and seminars, collaboration and cooperation with national and regional classification groups, keeping track of classification terminology and the sponsoring of research in this field, publihsing on classification and indexing matters, the education of classifiers and indexers and the maintenance of various files and directories pertaining to people and activities in the field. Past projects and activities fall into a number of the above categories. There has been a good deal of communication and dissemination of information on classification research through publication of high quality and four very successful international study conferences. Less emphasis has been given to education, although a proposed project to provide an international directory of courses in indexing and classification would be a step in that direction. Nevertheless, although FID/CR has a primary interest in research and encourages individual researchers by soliciting papers and providing a forum for international exchange of ideas through the study conferences, the Committee does not have a research and development plan and does not presently have projected itinerary for co-ordinated and cumulative research. The most obvious implication of FID's Strategic Plan is the need for greater "activity" on the part of the Committee as a whole, particularly in planning, direction and sponsorship of research. How such activity could be established and sustained, and what form it would take is not an easy question to answer. "What research is needed?" may be less difficult to determine. More study is needed. Also in the near future, there will be at least two conferences, one in Albany, NY, USA (see the announcement in FID/CR News 22) and the other in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, June 1989 (announcement below) which could provide food for thought on this matter. Indeed, it may not be the identification of research needs, but the establishment of priorities and the development of a "plan" which will present the greatest challenge.

Since FID is committed to the theoretical aspects of documentation, there seems to be no question of FID/CR decreasing its emphasis on classification theory. Indeed it is essential that FID/CR continue this fundamental and important role internationally. Balanced against theoretical considerations there should be carefully developed applied research in the most important areas of need. For example, there is still much scope for research and experimentation in the role of classification and indexing in computerized systems. In our contemporary world of Boolean and keyword searching, classification has frequently receded into the shadows when information systems are being designed. There is often an absence of the understanding of classification and classificatory structure in the broadest sense and its potential for effective use in present and future information systems. New and more effective systems must be designed which exploit various methods of access to information depending on the requirements of the particular system. At the same time history has shown that existing systems are not quickly superceded by new systems, no matter how excellent those new systems may be. There is some obligation to ensure the most effective use of existing systems while needed, at the same time seeking a better world. In particular, FID's own classification - UDC - is currently the subject of momenteous decisions concerning its future. It seems appropriate and logical to ask whether or not FID/CR might contribute in some way to research and development which would aid in those decisions. Other concerns which fall within the purview of FID/CR are indexing and thesaurus development. As well, classification and classification theory have an essential role to play in the future development of knowledge-based systems. These are only some of the possibilities which might be identified. Yet, even in this very preliminary analysis, it is possible to see at least three broad areas in which FID/CR might begin to build a programme for research and development. Initial considerations might focus on the following: 1) theoretical considerations;
2) the application of classification and indexing in existing systems; and 3) research and investigation into the potential for classification and classificatory structure in future systems.

What research should be done is only one aspect of the problem. The other major concern is "Who will do it, now and in the future?" Where are the classificationists who will take us into the 21st century? Are classificationists a dying breed? To pose such a question may be undue pessimism in the extreme. However, classification research is not an area of research which has attracted many young and energetic recruits over the past few years. It is true that many of the "great names" in classification are still active, vitally interested, and serving the cause of classification well. However, the time may have come to be concerned about who will come after. In the next few years, it will be essential to cultivate and bring into FID/CR and similar organizations young, enthusiastic professionals with creative and analytical minds, who will take their places in classification research, both nationally and internationally. Where will they come from? How do we find them? How do we get them involved? One obvious route is through library and information science education where it may be possible to encourage student involvement in FID/CR sponsored research projects. It is important to recognize that this should not be the only source. For example, in the past, practicing documentalists and information scientists have made important contributions to classification and indexing research. If classification research is to have an impact on contemporary and future systems design, it is essential that this constituency of information professionals be involved. They are the people who design the systems and create the databases.

While new directions in FID may be the catalyst for a reconsideration and reassessment of FID/CR and its activities, the group of people who recognize the importance of research and development in classification and inexing is growing smaller. FID/CR is the appropriate body to promote renewed interest and new directions for classification and indexing research. It is important that we begin now to formulate a plan for action. What role can and should FID/CR play in shaping the future of classification and indexing theory and practice? What are some of the ways in which we might effectively involve the membership of FID/CR? Do you have some suggestions or answers? Any contributions you can make on these issues will be important in determining the future directions of FID/CR. What directions to you see for classification research? Nancy Williamson

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U.K.: CRG Meetings 265 and 266

The 265th meeting of the Classification Research Group was held at University College London on February 11, 1988 with 12 members and one guest (Mrs.Nila Jani of SNDT, Bombay) present.

Mr.Jack Mills introduced discussion on the classification of History in the second edition of the Bliss Classification (BC2). In History proper (history of events) the effective primary facet is communities, it becomes the first class under Historical period. Unlike a normal inverted schedule, the primary facet is not preceded by the secondary, tertiary, etc., facets (Specific periods, Aspects) since these are regarded as dependent on the nation or community. Under Universal History (with the world as the community) the facet formula is: aspect - specific period - particular community. He reminded of the fact that in Class K "Society" aspects were followed by general period and these by particular communities. Mrs.Aitchison expressed concern at the alteration of the arrangement in Social History from that of Class K. Mr.Langridge defended that History was a much older discipline and as it is much wider in scope, an independent analysis was justified. At a later point in the discussion he also pointed out that literary warrant should not be disregarded. Mr.Mills agreed that the clustering of topics reflected the way in which many historians think, yet he was constrained somewhat by the original order of BC in which History followed the Social Sciences.

The participants in the meeting received with regret the news that Mr. John Campbell had died.

The 266th meeting of the Classification Research Group was held on April 28, 1988 with 9 members present. It had been intended to discuss the problems of Communication and Information (Mrs. Aitchison), however, this topic was postponed until the October meeting. The discussions were instead concerned with the 3rd edition of Class J in BC2 which - as Mr.Foskett said in his opening remarks -had now been completed. He suggested to make the class an independent volume in itself with summary outlines of Classes I (Psychology), K (Society), and Q (Social Welfare) including also a summary of all the auxiliaries as well as an updated version of the third outline of the whole scheme in the prelims. The latter could also serve as a curriculum facet. When he was accused of trying to make a general classification serve as a series of special classifications, he and Mr. Mills replied that this was precisely their intention. In comparing this class with the second edition of his London Classification of Education (LEC2) he found a number of terms which did not occur in BC2. And after checking also with the EUDISED Thesaurus, Mrs. Aitchison' s thesaurus and the annual volume of the British Education Index with the alphabetical index to the scheme, he found that many of the missing terms were actually in the schedules as synonyms. The sections were then discussed in detail, especially the one on Human biology, health and hygiene and Vocational Education.

The meeting approved the appointment of Mr.A. Sandison as treasurer, and authorized Dr.McIlwaine and Mr.J.Mills as signatories for the Group's Building Society account.

Forthcoming Meetings

Aug.28-Sept.3, 1988: IFLA Section of Classification and Indexing

At the IFLA Annual Conference in Sydney, Australia, Aug.28-Sept.3, 1988, Robert P.Holley will present a "Report and review of the work of the Section on Classification and Indexing in the Division of Bibliographic Control. In the section meeting papers will be presented on "Australian Directions in Subject Access" (Elaine Hall) and on "Classification in Online Catalogues: Present Problems and Future Prospects" (Nancy Williamson). The latter paper describes research being carried out in preparation for the development of a computerized system for the Library of Congress Classification schedules. For further information please contact the Chairperson, IFLA Section on Classification and Indexing, Dr.Robert P.Holley, whose new address effective July 1, 1988 is: Associate Dean of Libraries, Purdy Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202, USA.

Oct.15-18, 1988: ASIS SIG/CR

At the annual conference of ASIS in Atlanta, USA, the SIG/CR programme theme will be "The Impact of Technology on Classification Research". Papers will be presented on "The Library of Congress Classification: Towards an Online System for the Schedules" and "The Unified Medical Language System". For further information please contact Ms.Jennifer Younger, Vice-Chair, ASIS SIG/CR, 330 Memorial Library, 728 State Street, Madison, WI 53706, USA.

April 10-12, 1989: 13th Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Klassifikation

The German Society for Classification sent out a call for papers for its 13th Annual Meeting, to take place at Augsburg, FRG under the general topic: "Contents-Related and Numerical Analysis of Data". The themes of the call have been listed under the Section "Reports and Communications" of this issue. For further information please contact: Prof.Dr.Otto Opitz, Lehrstuhl für Mathematische Methoden in den Wirtschaftswissenschaften, Universität Augsburg, Memminger Str. 14, D-8900 Augsburg.

June 20-21, 1989: International Conference on Library Classification and its Functions

This conference will take place at Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. It will focus on three functions of classification, the bibliothecal function, the bibliographic function and the cognitive function. It will also consider such topics as artificial intelligence, and automatic classification. For further information please contact: Dr.Andre Nitecki, Faculty of Library Science, University of Alberta, T6G 2J4, Edmonton, Canada.

Summer 1990: 5th International Study Conference on Classification Research

This conference will continue the tradition of the first 4 conferences. A call for papers and details of the proposed conference will be published in FID/CR News later this year.

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